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## Government Formation

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins to evaluate our ideas empirically rather than simply drawing out their theoretical implications. The specific hypotheses considered are those codifying the conditions under which various types of government emerge (see Table 2.3 for the various rules of government formation discussed in Chapter 2 above). The evidence used relates to the situations in which post-war governments formed and is mainly taken from compilations of newspaper reports like Keesing's Contemporary Archives, *The Times Index*, and the *New York Times Index*, as well as more specialized collections like those of von Beyme<sup>1</sup> and various Government Statistical Indexes, which are cited at the appropriate places (for a full discussion of data sources, see Appendix B). The exact form taken by the data will become evident from the specific tables below.

Our present analysis stems directly from a similar investigation carried through in 1978 for much the same democracies.<sup>2</sup> This was very successful: 85 per cent of governments examined conformed to our criteria as then formulated and other checks also gave very positive results. As more than ten years have elapsed since the earlier study was completed, we have to check whether the criteria can again be validated as convincingly as they were then, given new experiences of government in the 1980s and the slight modifications to the wording, particularly to Rule v(b) (where we now talk of viable governments, rather than minimal winning coalitions, forming in the absence of policy agreements).

We can also extend the investigation in certain respects. Like most analyses of government formation, our checks took each government as a separate 'case': that is, each counted as one example either for or against the hypotheses, no matter whether it lasted one month or three years. Obviously this approach is sensible from many points of

view—a government is a government if it is officially constituted as one, and its exact period of office is beside the point. Hence in this new analysis, as in the earlier study, we check success by seeing what proportion of governments conform to our expectations out of all governments formed up to the end of 1984.

On the other hand, there is a sense in which a longer-lasting government constitutes more of a 'success' than one of relatively limited duration. Hence there is something to be said for using a 'government-month' as the unit of analysis, at least to supplement the counts based on governments pure and simple. Since the expectation is that governments formed in accordance with our rules will be more stable and hence last longer than those not conforming, the proportion of 'government-months' supportive of the hypothesis should be greater than the proportion of governments, as the latter must include certain 'mistakes', which we assume to terminate fairly quickly. At any rate we can compare results obtained by the two methods to see if such an expectation is confirmed.

The same logic suggests another supplementary check, this time based on the parties going into a government rather than the governments themselves. Even if governments lack one or other component party prescribed by our rules, we should still expect, to the extent that our theory is valid, that most parties which *should* go into government *do* actually go into government. The rules after all describe general tendencies towards forming a particular government, not rigidly deterministic situations which fit the criteria in all respects. The greater the number of parties expected to do so that actually enter a government, the more the rules are corroborated—even if the total constellation of parties is not exactly that assumed. Where possible, therefore, we shall use a count of the parties that are where they ought to be, as a proportion of all the parties existing in each government-formation situation. That will supplement the counts of governments as such, and of government-months, in evaluating the success of the theory in the area.

Two checks not applied in the earlier study will thus be used here. The criteria, in substantially the same form, have already survived a further and even more stringent test. This consisted of estimating the number of alternative party combinations, *not* in fact forming a government, which *would* have been predicted by our rules to do so—whether or not the latter successfully characterized the actual government. This test seems, perhaps, a little abstruse, but is really

strict and demanding. The reasoning is as follows. Success in characterizing the party composition of the government which actually forms could be due to laxity, in the sense that the criteria might allow practically every conceivable combination to form a government. Such a characterization would not give us much more information than simply stipulating 'any party combination can form a government'. We would have a high success rate with such a tautology but it would not constitute a real theory nor add significantly to our information. A check on the extent to which the criteria give a unique or fairly unique characterization of the government coalition is thus a useful way of discovering how much genuine information they really give us.

As our rules in almost the same form have already been shown to give reasonably unique predictions (admittedly on the basis of a more limited data set), there is no need to expose them to it again. A straight reading of Table 2.3 shows that the criteria are far from admitting all combinations as feasible under specified circumstances: in fact the wording is rather restrictive, clear, and unambiguous. So empirical success will not be achieved through tautology. With this reassurance we pass from general considerations to specifying evidence for the checks we shall apply.

#### DEFINITIONS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS

Before we can proceed to an actual test, we need to say how certain key terms will be defined and applied in practice. Since concepts like 'threat to democracy' or 'Left-Right feeling' are absolutely vital to the success or failure of the rules, it is necessary to be totally clear about their meaning and application. Otherwise the ambiguities and tautologies which have, we hope, been avoided in the theoretical statement will simply creep in at this level.

The various key distinctions are applied to the democracies under consideration in Table 3.1. The first column lists the set of countries chosen for the study. The selection includes almost all those existing democracies which have autonomously maintained competitive elections over the post-war period. This excludes the majority of underdeveloped countries which became independent only in the late 1950s or 1960s; also such countries as Greece, Spain, and Portugal where democratic processes have been interrupted. The period taken is that

TABLE 3.1 Political characterizations of twenty-one post-war  
parliamentary democracies

	Duration of anti- democratic threat	Duration of Left-Right feeling	Anti-system party or parties	Normal party or parties of government
Australia	—	1949-61, 1974-80	—	Liberal, Country, Labour
Austria	1945-64	1945-65	Communist,* Freedom (1945-75)	People's, Socialist
Belgium	1945-7	1961-5	Communist*	Christian Social
Canada	—	—	—	Liberal
Denmark	1945-7	1966-73	Communist,* Socialist People's, Progress	Social Deomocrat
Finland	—	—	—	Agrarian, Swedish People's
France 4	1946-7	—	Communist,* RPF (1947-54)	Socialist, Radical, MRP
5	1958-62	1966-84	Communist (1958-69), New Right	Gaullist, Ind. Rep.
West Germany	—	1949-59	Communist	Free Democrat
Iceland	—	—	—	Independence
Ireland	—	—	Sinn Féin	Fianna Fáil
Israel	—	—	—	Labour
Italy	1945-7	—	Communist (1947-70), Monarchist, Neo-Fascist (MSI)	Christian Democrat
Japan	—	1946-84	Communist, Komeito	Liberal Democrat
Luxemburg	1945-7	—	Communist*	Christian Socialist
Netherlands	1945-7	1966-84	Communist,* Pacifist Socialist, Boeren (Farmers)	CDA, KVP
New Zealand	—	1976-84	—	Conservative, Labour
Norway	1945-7	1959-84	Socialist People's	Labour
Sweden	—	1957-84	—	Social Democrat
Switzerland	—	—	Communist	CVP, FDP, SPS, SVP
UK	—	1971-84	—	Conservative, Labour

\* From April 1947.

since the war, from the first regular parliament of the regime to the end of 1984 (when data collection for our study ceased).

The next column of Table 3.1 lists the duration of anti-democratic threats (if any). Since politicians often cry wolf on this point we have tended to be conservative in defining these (for example, even though West Germany had a grand coalition between 1966 and 1969, based on the alleged threat from the Neo-Nazis, we do not consider the threat posed by their scattered provincial victories serious enough for inclusion). Emphasis is placed on the immediacy of a threat. Obviously the existence of large Communist parties in France and Italy has generated fears of a non-democratic take-over which are important in understanding the politics of these countries: nevertheless it has never seemed that they were about to complete a take-over next month, so we do not regard France and Italy as experiencing a permanent crisis throughout the post-war period.

Most European countries are regarded as having undergone a crisis immediately after the Second World War, as governments wrestled with the vast economic problems of reconstruction and unknown dangers of a Nazi Fascist reaction, which in fact would not materialize (but nobody knew this). Paradoxically, Germany and Japan did not experience such a crisis, since democratic government went through a reasonably lengthy period of emergence under the aegis of occupying troops. In spite of having to be sensitive to Russian reactions, Finland is not regarded as having at any time experienced an immediate threat, since it was obvious from the conclusion of their armistice in 1944 that the Soviet Union did not intend to take over the country—if it had, it would have done so then. Similarly, although in a sense Israel has been living dangerously since it came into existence, it has always from 1949 enjoyed an evident military dominance so no immediate threat has been experienced. Austria is obviously different, with Soviet troops actually on her soil for ten years, and their withdrawal followed by suppression of the Hungarian revolt on her border and then by the United States–Soviet confrontations of the early 1960s into which she could well have been drawn. The threats posed by the Algerian crisis, army mutinies, and terrorism in France between 1958 and 1962 are likewise immediate, in a sense in which IRA activity in the Republic of Ireland is not. While the determination of the exact periods of threat is judgemental, they are not arbitrarily imposed, and they avoid tautology by basing themselves on the ‘objective’ presence of a threat as reflected in contemporary discussion rather than the presence of a

government of national unity, which would indeed be tautological in terms of our assumptions and hypotheses.

The same is true for the upsurge of divisive Left–Right feeling that affected most politics generally from the mid-1960s but which in some cases were triggered by specific events. Sweden is a case in point, where the Social Democrats in the mid-1950s intensified political antagonisms with all the bourgeois parties by advancing proposals for increasing State pensions and their holdings in industry, thus vastly extending government intervention in society and the economy. The continuance and strengthening of this radical programme eventually pushed the bourgeois parties into a closer alliance which maintained the Left–Right confrontation up to the end of our period.

Party politics in Norway followed this general pattern, with the emergence of the Socialist People’s Party, and Labour dependence on them in the legislature, pulling Labour more decisively to the Left throughout the 1960s—a pull enhanced by the victory of the opposition to joining the European Community in the Referendum of 1973, which at first split Labour but afterwards reasserted its anti-Establishment values. A similar pattern might have emerged in Denmark, where the Socialist People’s Party pulled the Social Democrats away from the more radical of the two Liberal groupings, had the extraordinary success of new populist parties in the elections of 1973 not pushed all the older established parties together again at that point.

In The Netherlands from 1966 the Labour party spontaneously raised the political temperature by deciding as a matter of principle not to join any government coalition with the Liberals. This forced the religious parties to choose decisively between a Left and a Right orientation, foreclosing any blurring of the alternatives, and thus contributed to a polarization in which the sympathy of the religious parties, if not always their immediate tactical choices, lay increasingly with the Right.

Belgium experienced an intensification of Left–Right feeling earlier. The resolution in 1958 of the schools question, with its associated clerical–anti-clerical divisions which cut across those of class, seemed to clear the way for a more focused Left–Right confrontation, sparked off by the austerity package of the *Loi unique* of 1961 and the violent trade-union opposition which it provoked. The elimination of religious issues also cleared the way, however, for a quite different conflict related to the relative position of Flemings and

Walloons within the country. These rapidly replaced class issues as the most important on the agenda, giving rise not only to a plethora of new parties and the division of the older ones, but to a restructuring of the Belgian State itself.

In France we have to deal with two quite different regimes and party systems—those of the parliamentary Fourth Republic and of the semi-presidential Fifth Republic. The differences make it necessary in this and subsequent discussions to treat the two as separate cases and to check hypotheses independently in each. Under the Fourth Republic the fragility of governments and of the regime itself rendered constitutional questions all-important and forced Socialists, Christian Democrats (the MRP), and Radicals into constant collaboration. The need for defence against violent subversion, and related constitutional issues, also dominated the opening years of the Fifth Republic. With the settlement in Algeria and the defeat of the Ultras by 1962 the way was opened for the events leading up to May 1968 and the continuing repercussions of that anarcho-syndicalist episode. Even if the Left subsequently became more moderate, the Gaullists and the Centre-Right then became more extreme, prolonging a Left-Right polarization to the end of our period.

In Britain the evolution of a new, anti-consensual brand of Conservatism under Heath and Thatcher, and the success of left-wing elements in dominating opposition policies (though never those of Labour governments) made the 1970s and 1980s a period of intense confrontation. The use made by the Liberal-Country coalition of the Cold War issue in Australia during the 1950s, coupled with the ideological fervour of Evatt, the Labour leader, intensified ideological opposition in that period, as did the constitutional implications of the conflict between Whitlam and Fraser in the 1970s. This was paralleled in New Zealand by the New Rightism of Muldoon during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany were exceptions to the general trend for Left-Right divisions, if they occurred at all, to intensify during the 1960s and after. In both cases the rigid and rather doctrinaire positions of the Social Democrats which prevailed during the 1950s were modified by a newly pragmatic leadership for the 1960s. Japan on the other hand has always had a thoroughgoing radical Socialist party, and the attitudes of the ruling Liberal Democrats have always been more orthodox and traditional than in other countries.

For varying reasons the other democracies of our study have never experienced straightforward polarization on a Left-and-Right basis: Canadian politics, like those of the United States, are in any case less ideologically rooted than those of Europe; Finland's delicate position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union precludes a strong emphasis on this type of conflict; Icelandic politics are both too complex (with cross-cutting rural-urban divisions) and too personalized (in a country of very small population) to engender it; the same can be said of Luxemburg. Ireland and Israel both have dominant issues overshadowing class questions, while Italy's complex multi-party system, with splits in both Left and Right, prevents any focused division between these tendencies.

Characterizations of anti-system parties are relatively straightforward. Only in one case (Sinn Féin) is a party actually banned by law as subversive. But many parties have as their professed aim a radical change of the system, which is often interpretable as total opposition to its existing practices including those of democracy. Communist parties were commonly in this position from the take-over of the Czech regime in 1947 up to the present, with the exception of those like the Partito Comunista Italiano which strongly dissociated themselves from Stalinist tradition with their assertion of 'Eurocommunism' in the 1970s. The French party, though always more Stalinist in general attitudes, began a highly pragmatic if intermittent collaboration with the Socialists in 1969. Some parties, on the other hand, have been suspect for their connections with Fascists or Nazis (the MSI in Italy, and the Freedom Party, in the early post-war era, in Austria). Others again, whether of Left or Right, have been under suspicion because of their radical populist base and expressed hostility to the system (sometimes including incitement to break existing laws). These include on the one side Komeito in Japan, Glistrup's anti-tax Progress Party in Denmark, the Poujadistes under the French Fourth Republic, and the New Right of Le Pen under the Fifth; and on the other side the various Left Socialist groupings in Western Europe.

'Normal parties of government' are of course those parties often—in some cases permanently—in government over the post-war period. So the success of the hypothesis runs the risk of being tied up tautologically with the definition. However, such parties can also be picked out on other grounds, such as their key strategic role between Left and Right, or their constant ability to complement—without dominating—a large party. Into the first category fit centre parties

like the Finnish Agrarians, the Icelandic Independence Party, and the various Christian Social or Christian Democratic and other religious parties. Predominant parties are also in a sense expected to be in government, like one or other of the leading parties in a competitive two-party system. A confirmation of the presence of such parties in government is not of course world-shaking in itself. In conjunction with the other criteria of Table 2.2, however, it does serve as a useful further specification of the expected party composition.

The final definitional point is what constitutes a 'significant' party. As we confine our discussion to such parties in the rest of the book, the question again affects our results quite vitally. It arises because of the plethora of parties which exist in most countries—some being purely a name and very few gaining any electoral success. Even parties represented by a few seats in Parliament may have such limited effects either on legislation or on governments that they ought properly to be ignored in an assessment of the criteria.

The question is, where does one draw the line? Most would agree with Sartori's suggestion that relevant or significant parties in the countries we are dealing with are those which either influence the formation of governments or, if excluded from government, are too large to ignore.<sup>3</sup> These inclusion rules give general guidelines but need to be specified. After considering particular cases in each country, we decided that a general rule would operate quite well and accordingly defined significant parties as those with over 5 per cent of legislative seats at any stage in the post-war period. Although the actual level at which one places this boundary is always slightly arbitrary we are convinced by detailed inspection that this one does not produce gross anomalies. The proviso that we include parties who at any time cross this threshold also allows for the effects of historical record and reputation in sustaining a party (like, for example, the Italian Liberals) who for most of the post-war period fell below this level but for all that remained capable of precipitating the fall of governments.<sup>4</sup>

#### CORRESPONDENCE OF EXPECTED AND ACTUAL PARTY PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

With these decisions made, we are now in a position to distinguish each type of legislative situation highlighted by the criteria, for all

twenty-one democracies (if we distinguish the Fourth and Fifth French Republics) over the post-war period, to see (1) whether the expected type of government in fact emerges, (2) whether 'predicted' governments last longer than those formed contrary to our theory, and (3) whether most parties join the governments they are expected to. It will be remembered that a government is an administration initiated in one of the following ways: (a) post-election formation, (b) change in the Prime Minister, (c) change in the party composition of the cabinet, (d) resignation in an inter-election period followed by reformation of the government with the same Prime Minister and party composition.<sup>5</sup> We say that a party is a *member* of a government when one or more individuals identified with that party participate in the cabinet, this participation being understood to commit individual members of that party to the support of the government whenever its continued existence is at stake.<sup>6</sup>

Each theoretical rule in Table 2.3 specifies a particular type of legislative situation and states what type of government will emerge under those circumstances. All the governments formed in situations of a specified type, at any time in the post-war period, are now put together and examined in aggregate. Figures for each type of situation are examined separately in a different table. This helps emphasize the fact that there is no overlap of cases: the cases included in one table appear only there and are not carried over to any of the others. All post-war governments of course appear in one or other of the tables.

Since the criteria are hierarchic in the sense that an aforementioned circumstance takes precedence over others, we start with Rule i, dealing with situations in which governments form under an immediate threat to democracy. The first column of Table 3.2 reports the total number of governments formed in periods of anti-democratic threats. Countries omitted from this table are those characterized as not having experienced such threats during the post-war era (see Table 3.1 above). The second column gives proportions of all coalitions formed during such periods which grouped the significant pro-democratic parties and which simultaneously excluded anti-system parties; in other words, the second column shows the success rate of the hypothesis, the proportions of actual cases correctly characterized.

From these a first impression emerges: that the criterion adequately characterizes actual behaviour only in certain countries, above all in Austria—which, however, represents a third of the cases owing to the

TABLE 3.2. Governments formed under an immediate threat to democracy: Inclusion of pro-system and exclusion of anti-system parties (Table 2.3, Rule 1)

	Governments formed		Government-months		Parties <sup>b</sup>	
	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)
	Austria	11	1.00	237.6	1.00	22
Belgium	2	0.00	7.2	0.00	8	0.50
Denmark	1	0.00	24.0	0.00	6	0.33
France 4	10	0.40	60.6	0.20	61	0.83
5	3	0.00	38.4	0.00	18	0.70
Italy	2	0.00	9.6	0.00	12	0.58
Luxembourg	1	1.00	15.6	1.00	4	1.00
Netherlands	1	0.00	4.0	0.00	6	0.33
Norway	1	0.00	36.0	0.00	6	0.16
All countries	32	0.50	453.0	0.68	143	0.73

<sup>a</sup> The prediction of the theory is that all significant pro-system parties will join the government and all anti-system parties will be excluded.

<sup>b</sup> Each party is counted separately at the formation of every government.

length of time the crisis continued (nineteen years). The other notable regime, again accounting for a third of cases, is France under the Fourth Republic. The high numbers of governments here are due both to the duration of the crises (five years) and to the frequency of government change. At a proportion of only 0.40, four cases out of ten correctly characterized, compared to all cases for Austria, the success rate is comparatively much lower but still higher than for the Fifth Republic, Italy, the Low Countries, and Scandinavia. The patchy success of the criterion in different countries is reflected in an overall rate of only 0.50: exactly one-half of governments formed in crisis situations over all the countries involved were correctly characterized. Success rates in terms of government-months are no higher and sometimes lower than those for governments taken as units.

The total failure of the hypothesis to apply to Belgium, Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, and Italy could point to one or other of several possibilities. One is that politicians in these countries simply did not feel under threat at the end of the war, in which case our operationalization (Table 3.1) would be wrong. As against this there was much talk of Nazi-sympathizers lurking behind ready to take over;<sup>7</sup> and Italy actually saw the formation of the MSI. The threat under the Fifth Republic from 1958-62 is hardly in doubt. It may be that parties in different countries act on the basis of diverse motivations and strategies, so that different models fit behaviour in different contexts.

Before endorsing such a conclusion on the basis of these findings, however, there are certain qualifications to be made in favour of the hypothesis we have suggested. First, the fact that the two regimes with the most prolonged experience of crisis show the most conformity to our expectations is significant in that politicians might have had more opportunity to learn from experience the best response to the situation. A more concrete qualification relates to the actual classifications made in the cases of the Fifth Republic and Italy. In both cases governments are characterized as not meeting expectations because of the non-participation of the Socialist parties, which in general are legitimist parties. In both cases, however, the Socialist party during the particular period in question (Italy just after the war, France during the first years of the Gaullist regime) could from some points of view be regarded as anti-system. In Italy the Socialists were more vociferous in criticizing the regime than the Communists and entered into an electoral alliance with the latter from 1947 to 1954. In France

they were directly hostile to the Fifth Republic until well into the sixties. We have not made changes to the general operationalizations in Table 3.1 to meet these special cases, so these governments must in the end be marked down as failures of the criteria; but the extenuating circumstances deserve to be noted.

What can be said on the basis of the actual figures of Table 3.2 is that the final column, representing the proportions of parties which are where they are expected to be theoretically, shows a markedly higher success rate for the hypothesis than the government-based proportions—0.73 for all countries together, compared to 0.68 and 0.50. This is also true of certain individual countries—the Fourth Republic (a success rate of 0.83), the Fifth (0.70), and Italy (0.58). Obviously there is a tendency for significant pro-system parties to join in governments of national unity at those times, even if not all do so. The rule is tendential and statistical in nature rather than fully deterministic, therefore its success in characterizing party behaviour is perhaps more significant than its poorer performance with governments overall.

Such saving clauses could only apply, however, if the other hypotheses derived from the theory perform substantially better than this and indirectly buttress the credibility of Rule i. Turning therefore to Table 3.3, we see what actually happens when, in the absence of threats to democracy, one party or electoral alliance wins a majority of legislative seats. Not surprisingly, we find almost universal support for the hypothesis in all countries, whether success is reckoned in terms of governments as such or government-months. This success certainly acts to buttress the credibility of our formulation as a whole, though the expectation that the party with a majority of legislative seats will form a single-party government is shared with minimal-winning and many other theories of government coalition formation. It is of course natural for office-seeking as well as policy-pursuing parties to seek to take all posts for themselves.

However, the policy-pursuing model, by Rule ii(b) of Table 2.3, also accommodates the tendency of many majority parties to associate in government with a small party (or even more than one) which is not strictly necessary to gain a legislative majority. To gain policy ends while reassuring the uncommitted, it may be useful to share a few offices in this way provided underlying dominance is not threatened.

Two additional methodological points need to be made in regard to Table 3.3. First, one should be aware that the criteria of 'success' for

TABLE 3.3. Governments where one party or alliance has a legislative majority (no threat to democracy): Dominance of majority party, exclusion of anti-system parties (Table 2.3 Rule ii)

	Governments formed		Government-months		Parties <sup>b</sup>	
	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)
Australia	23	0.95	460.0	0.95	46	0.96
Austria	5	1.00	188.4	1.00	15	1.00
Belgium	3	1.00	45.6	1.00	12	1.00
Canada	8	1.00	360.0	1.00	40	1.00
France 5	18	1.00	280.68	1.00	117	1.00
West Germany	5	1.00	153.6	1.00	15	1.00
Ireland	9	1.00	246.0	1.00	27	1.00
Italy	5	1.00	61.2	1.00	34	1.00
Japan	19	1.00	345.6	1.00	73	1.00
New Zealand	17	1.00	454.8	1.00	41	1.00
Norway	5	1.00	142.8	1.00	20	1.00
Sweden	2	1.00	37.2	1.00	10	1.00
UK	15	1.00	441.6	1.00	45	1.00
All countries <sup>c</sup>	127	0.99	3,304.8	0.98	442	0.98

<sup>a</sup>The prediction of theory is that the majority party/alliance will dominate government and anti-system parties will be excluded.

<sup>b</sup>Each party is counted separately at the formation of every government.

<sup>c</sup>India and Sri Lanka both conform to the 'prediction' of the theory in all particulars for relevant government-formation situations—11 in the case of India, 8 in the case of Sri Lanka.

Rules ii(a) and ii(b) vary somewhat with normal governmental arrangements in each country. Where single-party government is usual, no other type of arrangement has been considered a success (Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway (for Labour governments), Sweden, United Kingdom). In the other countries, where coalitions are usual, the domination of government by the majority party, even if it has small partners has been considered a success. Secondly, electoral alliances where the partners pledged themselves in advance to form a government together should they gain a majority are regarded effectively as majority parties—the justification being that the alliance has already received a majority in the elections on the basis of their future combination in government, just like a single party. This applies particularly to the smaller Irish parties, France under the Fifth Republic, and the SPD–FDP in Germany from 1970 to 1982 (and the FDP–CDU in 1983).

In Table 3.4 we consider situations characterized by the absence of anti-democratic threats and of a majority party, where there is, however, strong Left–Right feeling on salient current issues, which induce the opposing tendencies to line up against each other (Table 2.3 Rule iii). There is reasonable confirmation for this hypothesis in almost all countries, in the sense of high proportions of governments formed under strong Left–Right feeling enlisting the support of the majority tendency. Only in Belgium is the expectation totally reversed—but by only one government in a very confused political situation. Lower success in Japan is due to the disruption of normal political life and extraneous influences from the Occupation immediately after the war. In The Netherlands the success rate would have been higher had the main religious parties not been outmaneuvered into coalition with the PvdA (Labour) under den Uyl from 1973 to 1977, since when they have stuck with the increasingly right-wing Liberals. In Norway and Sweden on the other hand, even where Labour and Social Democrats were in a minority, they could always rely on crucial support from Communists or from Left Socialists, countered in turn by increasing solidarity among the bourgeois parties.

The success of Rule iii (like that of Rule v(b), below) is central to our whole policy-based theory of government formation as it puts so much emphasis on the binding effect of policy agreements in situations where simple rivalry for office would have forced the partners asunder. It therefore adds a strong cumulative confirmation of the theory to that of Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.4. Governments where no party or alliance has a legislative majority and Left–Right feeling is strong (no threat to democracy): Participation of all significant parties in the majority tendency, exclusion of anti-system parties (Table 2.3 Rule iii)

	Governments formed		Government-months		Parties <sup>b</sup>	
	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)
Belgium	1	0.00	51.6	0.00	5	0.40
Denmark	4	1.00	85.2	0.69	20	1.00
West Germany	2	1.00	47.2	1.00	12	1.00
Japan	11	0.55	113.6	0.65	57	0.84
Netherlands	10	0.60	195.6	0.70	74	0.85
Norway	14	0.86	263.9	0.88	90	0.87
Sweden	11	0.82	311.2	0.94	55	0.90
All countries	53	0.73	1,118.3	0.80	313	0.87

<sup>a</sup>The prediction of the theory is that governments formed will consist of, or be supported by, all significant parties in the majority tendency, and will exclude all anti-system parties.

<sup>b</sup>Each party is counted separately at the formation of every government.

TABLE 3.5. Governments where no party or alliance has a legislative majority and Left-Right feeling is not strong (no threat to democracy): Dominance of the legislatively pre-eminent party, exclusion of anti-system parties (Table 2.3 Rule iv)

	Governments formed		Government-months		Parties <sup>b</sup>	
	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)
	Austria	3	1.00	43.2	1.00	9
Belgium	4	1.00	40.8	1.00	16	1.00
Canada	4	1.00	74.4	1.00	18	1.00
Denmark	13	0.85	322.8	0.67	94	0.81
West Germany	7	0.86	152.4	0.76	21	0.86
Iceland	1	1.00	19.2	1.00	5	1.00
Ireland	6	0.83	182.4	0.78	32	0.78
Israel	14	1.00	186.0	1.00	113	1.00
Italy	29	1.00	304.9	1.00	186	1.00
Luxemburg	3	1.00	120.7	1.00	13	1.00
Sweden	5	1.00	132.0	1.00	25	1.00
All countries <sup>c</sup>	92	0.95	1,578.8	0.93	532	0.93

<sup>a</sup>The prediction of the theory is that governments formed will be dominated by the legislatively pre-eminent party and will exclude all anti-system parties. 'Legislatively pre-eminent' is defined as: (i) having 46% of seats or more, or (ii) being ahead of the next largest party by 13% of seats or more.

<sup>b</sup>Each party is counted separately at the formation of every government.

<sup>c</sup>India (1 government) and Sri Lanka (6 governments) conform entirely to the 'prediction' of the theory for this type of situation.

Legislative situations where there is no threat to democracy, no majority party, and where the absence of strong Left-Right divisions deprives smaller parties of motives for ganging up on big ones, leave the field open for legislatively pre-eminent parties to act in a quasi-majority role, reasonably secure from concerted opposition votes against them. In such a situation these parties are expected by Rule iv of Table 2.3 either to form a single-party government or, where coalitions are more usual, to dominate a government formed in conjunction with smaller parties. Table 3.5 checks this expectation against governments formed in legislative situations with such a party, again excluding any case already considered in the preceding tables and situations where such a party did not exist. This rule successfully characterizes a high proportion of the governments formed where either one party has a near majority of legislative votes or where one of the pro-system parties is outstandingly strong. The findings are not dependent on the particular definition of 'pre-eminent' specified in the notes to the table. Various cut-off points have been experimented with and all give broadly the same results, although the numbers themselves change somewhat.

The last rule listed in Table 2.3, designed to cover the situations (and only those situations) where previous ones do not apply, groups v(a), v(b), and v(c). All relate to multi-party situations where, in the absence of anti-democratic threats or strong Left-Right feeling, coalitions form around agreement on specific salient issues, or, failing such agreement, through minimizing the number of coalition partners. While these rules follow logically from our Assumption 2 (on parties seeking governments which will most effectively attain their policy objectives), the point about all normal parties being included and anti-system parties excluded is fairly unrestrictive. Table 3.6, with its high success rate on all the indicators, demonstrates this. None the less the proposition it tests is not purely tautological, as demonstrated dramatically by the low proportion of successes in Canada. And its close relationship to our central argument, that parties have substantive concerns reflected in the composition of governments, renders its validation illuminating in this context.

A much severer test of our reasoning comes, however, with Table 3.7. If policy is a central concern it should provide a major basis of coalition-building in fragmented party systems, where parties cannot come together on the basis of 'national unity' or generalized Left-Right feeling. Even when these are absent, parties should still find a

TABLE 3.6. Governments where no party or alliance has a legislative majority or pre-eminence and Left-Right feeling is not strong (no threat to democracy): Inclusion of normal parties of government, exclusion of anti-system parties (Table 2.3 Rule v(c))

	Governments formed		Government-months		Parties <sup>b</sup>	
	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)
Belgium	16	1.00	294.0	1.00	22	1.00
Canada	3	0.33	39.6	0.48	3	0.33
Denmark	6	0.57	110.5	0.81	26	0.90
Finland	38	0.94	466.0	0.95	38	0.92
France 4	16	0.63	76.9	0.54	80	0.91
West Germany	1	1.00	6.0	1.00	1	1.00
Iceland	13	0.69	417.6	0.78	13	0.69
Israel	17	0.58	201.6	0.61	17	0.58
Italy	12	1.00	90.5	1.00	36	1.00
Luxembourg	8	0.87	316.8	0.80	16	0.94
Netherlands	7	1.00	202.8	1.00	14	1.00
Switzerland	40	0.80	480.0	0.80	200	0.96
All countries <sup>c</sup>	177	0.85	2,702.3	0.79	467	0.91

<sup>a</sup>The prediction of the theory is that governments formed will include the normal parties of government and exclude all anti-system parties.

<sup>b</sup>Each party is counted separately at the formation of every government.

<sup>c</sup>The only Sri Lankan government formed in a situation of this type conformed to the 'prediction' of the theory.

TABLE 3.7. Governments where no party or alliance has a legislative majority or pre-eminence and Left-Right feeling is not strong (no threat to democracy): Agreement on one salient issue, exclusion of anti-system parties

	Governments <sup>a</sup>		Government-months	
	Total	As predicted <sup>b</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>b</sup> (proportion)
Belgium	11	0.63	128.4	0.50
Finland	11	0.81	124.8	0.88
France 4	6	0.16	26.5	0.50
Iceland	6	0.83	243.6	0.88
Israel	6	0.16	56.4	0.21
Italy	6	0.83	46.5	0.94
Netherlands	4	0.25	111.6	0.27
All countries	50	0.58	737.8	0.65

<sup>a</sup>All governments included in the figures for Table 3.6 are covered here if there was a salient issue at the time of their formation—provided that sufficient information is available on that issue; all those for which there was no salient issue or for which there is insufficient information on the salient issue are covered in Table 3.8.

<sup>b</sup>The 'prediction' of the theory is that governments will be formed by parties that agree on the salient issue, and will exclude all anti-system parties. Agreement on the salient issue is established as follows. The salient issue (e.g. inflation) is identified, the principal policy option (e.g. an incomes freeze) is identified; parties are considered to be in agreement on the issue if they are found to be either all 'for' or all 'against' the principal policy option. The existence of a party outside the government that shares the government preference does not infringe the criterion for government agreement as it does not affect the role of the agreement in bringing together the parties that form the government.

basis of co-operation in agreements on the most important issues of the day. These may or may not involve other long-standing party commitments, to groups or causes. They could involve areas like foreign policy where specific problems exert a pressure for their settlement. Whatever they are, their resolution provides a basis for party combination and joint action. This must be the case if our policy-pursuing assumption is correct.

The theory is clear but unfortunately the data are very scanty. Agreements of this kind are only patchily reported anywhere, even in otherwise detailed accounts of the political situation. We have been driven to record only the existence of salient issues, their character, and which parties agreed on the leading alternative. Where this

information is lacking we have had by default to assume there is no agreement and relegate the governments concerned to Table 3.8, even though we suspect, in many cases, that issue agreements did exist and were important in promoting a coalition. The characterization we made even where we had some information is obviously crude and would have been improved, or even changed, had better sources existed.

Given these imperfections, the success rates of Table 3.7, even the proportion based on governments as such—which at 0.58 for all countries together might in other cases be regarded as low—are in fact very encouraging. In the majority of countries policy agreements seem to form the basis for most coalitions. Where they do not—the Fourth Republic, Israel, and The Netherlands—the extremely fragmented multi-party system may make for difficulties of perception and communication which explain the failures. However, it is notable that in the equally fragmented systems of Finland and Italy policy agreement forms an important basis for the coalitions.

It is also notable from the table that in all countries other than Belgium proportions go up for government-months compared with governments, implying that governments formed on the basis of policy agreements—at least where the opportunity for these exists—are actually more enduring and stable than those which are not so based.

Where policy agreements are lacking (though we may think that in some cases it is not the agreements themselves but accurate reports of them that are lacking), no basis for coalition formation exists other than the aim of holding office and the desire to maximize office-holding by restricting participation, as the minimal-winning criterion says. In one important respect, however, our policy-based reasoning modifies that criterion: that is, in the perception that winning legislative votes of confidence does not always require 50 per cent plus one of legislative votes, but possibly more or possibly less. Confidence may very often be a product of the proper combination of parties—perhaps with well over 50 per cent of seats—rather than numerical ability to win. Given that countries have to have governments for day-to-day administration, a minority government may often be recognized as necessary for the time being, while its very weakness and dependence may render it more tolerable. This is quite apart from hostilities among non-governmental parties which may make it impossible for them to vote together.

In estimating what was necessary to win a vote of confidence we therefore based ourselves on the post-war history of the various countries rather than an abstract figure. Where governments generally governed with just over 50 per cent of seats and never went under this, we equated winning votes of confidence with forming a party bloc holding 50 per cent plus one of legislative seats and assumed that minimal winning coalitions, in the strict sense, would form. In some cases, such as that of Belgium, the average support of governments in the post-war period was over 60 per cent; however, several governments had governed, seemingly successfully, with just over 50 per cent, so this was taken as the crucial criterion. The countries where this applied are about half of those in Table 3.8 and are asterisked.

If we go to the opposite extreme, it is clear that in Switzerland the exact percentage support of a government is irrelevant. What is important is that all four of the major parties should continue their semi-permanent coalition, and this therefore has been taken as the criterion. Similarly in the Fourth Republic governments which aimed to gain legislative confidence should have been tripartite, grouping Radicals, MRP, and Socialists. The Canadian tradition of single-party government coupled with a two-and-two-halves-party system which often prevents any party gaining a majority favours the single party with a plurality taking over control of government and getting support on this basis—even from its leading rival, since this party had also benefited from the practice in the past.

In Denmark the traditional predominance of the Social Democrats, even at 38 per cent or less of the vote, meant that government was very often carried on in the absence of alternative combinations by that party acting alone; 35 per cent could thus be a viable basis for government provided it included the proper party.

Italy resembles Switzerland in having *formule di governo*—which, however, in the case of Italy, changed over the period. After the clear Christian predominance of the fifties, the *apertura a sinistra* meant that viable governments had also to incorporate the Socialists in the sixties. The *compromesso storico* of the seventies meant that governments, however constituted, had to acknowledge the influence of the Communists. After the breakdown of this arrangement all five non-Communist parties had to form a *pentapartito* government in order to continue. Ability to win votes of confidence must be assessed therefore against the extent to which the government incorporates the

appropriate *formula* for each post-war period, while including no party superfluous to that task.

In Finland the existence of a cycle of governments with large majorities alternating with minority governments has already been noted.<sup>8</sup> Rather than dismissing this as an aberration, it can be regarded as an essential aspect of government-making, in that the large majorities necessary to gain consensus for action tend to break down under mutual quarrels. In this situation minority administrations are the only ones possible and give a necessary pause during which negotiations for a new majority can succeed. In the case of Finland, therefore, judgements of the 'appropriateness' of governments for gaining legislative confidence were made on comparisons of the preceding government with the one under examination—one of which should have a large majority and the other a minority.

While the precise content of each formula is specified on the basis of political conditions in individual countries, the idea itself is general. Specifying the grounds on which governments may win legislative votes of confidence is necessary if we are to separate government *viability*—its ability to attract necessary support—from possession of a majority of seats.<sup>9</sup> The third of all governments which are minority governments can be explained only on the basis of desirable features which cause them to be supported; and as these are recurrent we arrive fairly quickly at the concept of a standing formula to which they conform and which then attracts support. Naturally the details of this vary with party system and country but the concept of formula itself is general.

On the basis, therefore, of whether a government was the minimal combination corresponding *either* to 50 per cent plus one of legislative seats *or* to another prevailing formula for viable government, the proportions of conformity to the theory shown in Table 3.8 are quite high—the notable exception being again France 4 (probably owing to a chaotic situation which prevented any formula working effectively). Proportions for government-months are generally higher than proportions for governments as such, implying greater stability for governments formed according to our norm; but the difference is less marked than in preceding tables. Possibly governments formed without policy-cement are inherently more unstable in any case.

TABLE 3.8. Governments where no party or alliance has a legislative majority or pre-eminence and Left-Right feeling is not strong (no salient issue, no threat to democracy): Composition by minimal viable combinations, exclusion of anti-system parties (Table 2.3 Rule v(6))

	Governments		Government-months	
	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)	Total	As predicted <sup>a</sup> (proportion)
Belgium*	5	0.60	165.6	0.68
Canada	3	1.00	39.6	1.00
Denmark	6	0.50	110.5	0.75
Finland	27	0.44	342.0	0.38
France 4	10	0.30	50.4	0.21
West Germany*	1	1.00	6.0	1.00
Iceland*	7	0.57	174.0	0.69
Israel*	11	0.45	145.2	0.51
Italy	6	1.00	44.0	1.00
Luxemburg*	8	0.75	316.8	0.83
Netherlands*	3	0.33	91.2	0.52
Switzerland	40	0.83	480.0	0.82
All countries <sup>b</sup>	127	0.64	1,965.3	0.65

<sup>a</sup>The prediction of the theory is that each government will be formed by the minimal combination of parties that can win legislative votes of confidence, and will exclude all anti-system parties. Countries marked with an asterisk are those where the ability to win such votes coincides with the control of 50% plus one of the legislative seats.

<sup>b</sup>The only Sri Lankan government formed in a situation of this type failed to conform to the 'prediction' of the theory.

The proportions resulting from applying the formula for winning a vote of confidence are in any case vastly better for this group of governments than those resulting from a mechanical overall application of the minimal-winning criterion—0.15 for governments and 0.28 for government-months. While nobody could claim that our inferred norms are perfect or infallible, they do seem to correspond to political realities better than the invariant rule of 50 per cent plus one.

#### OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF VALIDITY OF CRITERIA

This last claim could be made with equal justice for all the criteria examined earlier, which in combination operationalize a general

empirical theory of the way various types of governments emerge under different political stimuli. Of governments emerging under all types of situation in the twenty-one democracies selected for study, the proportion conforming with the combined rules of Table 2.3 is a remarkable 0.81. This is not excessively boosted by the successful characterization of single-party or dominant-party governments in a non-crisis majority situation (Rule ii)—a success shared by and large with other theories of coalition formation. For the success rate of the combined rules omitting these cases is still convincingly high (0.75). The proportion of government-months conforming to the rules is even higher (0.84), and that of individual parties higher still (0.92).

Nor is this success due to circularity in the definitions used in conjunction with the hypotheses. We have already referred to their ability to discriminate by excluding governments *not* formed, tested earlier though for a somewhat smaller data set.<sup>10</sup> Moreover the variation in the success rates both across countries and between criteria shows that success is far from automatic. The relatively lesser success of Rule i (that under threat all pro-system parties will join Governments of National Unity) and of Rule v(a) (that policy agreements from the basis for multi-party coalitions in the absence of other conditions) are tolerable within the context of overall success.

Thus, by making an allowance for the declared policy concerns of parties (Table. 2.1 Assumption 2) and establishing an order for these (Assumptions 3(a) and 3(b)), we have produced a theory of government formation that is notably more successful and informative than its predecessors. While we have relaxed the extreme mathematical formalism of some of these, the theory is still parsimonious, clear, and general.

Moreover it has the great advantage of being a theory not simply of government formation but of general party behaviour in government. Thus it relates the actual distribution of ministries in a government to the reasons for which parties joined it in the first place—that is, to the pursuit of their policies. The next chapter takes up this subject, which in turn closely relates to the making and implementation of governmental policy itself.

## CHAPTER 4

# Theories of Political Coalitions

The theories of political coalitions presented in this chapter share an underlying analytical structure provided by the rational decision model and its mathematical elaboration, game theory. The empirical referents to the theories remain undefined at this stage of the analysis, but all theories are intended to apply, among others, to voting bodies that take decisions by some kind of majority.

The theories discussed in this chapter have been advanced by different authors and therefore vary in terminology, notation and in the assumptions that were used in their derivation. Here they are revised to fit the notational and conceptual system of this book. All theories are incorporated into a general theoretical framework. This allows the similarities and differences in their analytical structure to be demonstrated and a procedure for the testing of the performance of all the theories to be designed.

It will appear that the crucial decision for each theorist concerns the choice of the motivational assumption and the definition of the context of the game. The specific motivational assumption determines what it is that actors are assumed to maximize; it plays the role of the "general theoretical assumption" about the causal laws that govern the behavior of the actors in the system. The other assumptions may be understood as factual assumption about the initial conditions and subsequent external influences affecting the system<sup>1</sup>. These assumptions should be necessary and sufficient in conjunction with the general theoretical assumption to generate a number of statements about reality (*e.g.* which coalitions will form in a given situation); those statements are then tested in

order to assess the validity of the general theoretical assumption. The most important factual assumption concerns the definition of the context of the game, whether or not it is constant-sum and whether or not payoffs may be transferred and side payments are allowed. This determines which solution concepts are applicable.

Other factual assumptions pertain to questions such as whether a parliamentary group may be considered a unitary actor or whether the parliamentary system is, in fact, the locus of decision making and whether it may be studied in isolation from other societal influences. These questions will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, with an eye to their theoretical implications, and again in Chapter 7, when the rules for operationalization of the theories are presented.

The theories of political coalitions studied here are concerned with the patterns of collaboration and opposition in voting bodies, *i.e.* with the composition of coalitions, rather than with the distribution of payoffs to winners and losers or with the stability of coalitions once they have formed.

Often a more or less permanent coalition emerges in such voting bodies which is in a position to determine decisions if it controls a majority of the votes.

Allowing for a variety of voting procedures, voting bodies adopt as their decision the proposal that has been supported by more members than some other proposal (*e.g.* the “*status quo*”). Sometimes not just simple majorities but absolute or two-thirds majorities are required. The majority criterion,  $m$ , will be defined as the smallest number of votes that is sufficient to secure adoption of a proposal. If voting occurs by simple majority among  $n$  voting members with one vote each,  $m$  is defined as

$$\frac{n+1}{2} \leq m \leq \frac{n}{2} + 1$$

If voting occurs by simple majority among members with unequally weighted votes, as for example, in a stockholders’ meeting, the weight of the vote of an actor  $i$  is written as “ $w_i$ ”. The sum of the weights of all members in the voting body may be rendered as “ $\sum w_i$ ”. The majority criterion,  $m$ , is defined as

$$m = \frac{1}{2} \sum w_i + d \quad \text{for all } i \in N$$

Here,  $d$  stands for any quantity that is larger than zero and smaller than the smallest unit of weight,  $w$ .

The weight of a coalition  $S$  may be written as  $w_S$ , which indi-

cates the number of members of the coalition in the case of equally weighted votes and, in the case of votes with unequal weights, it refers to the sum of the weights of the members:  $w_S = \sum w_i$ , for  $i \in S$ . A coalition is called “winning” when it controls sufficient votes or a weight large enough to command a majority:  $w_S \geq m$ . The set of winning coalitions is written as “ $w(S)$ ”. A coalition  $S$  belongs to the set of winning coalitions  $w(S)$ , when  $w_S$  equals or exceeds  $m$ :

$$S \in w(S) \text{ if, and only if, } w_S \geq m, \text{ for all } S \in N$$

Whether the actors that are not members of the winning coalition,  $S$ , join together in a coalition,  $-S$ , of losers, or distribute themselves over various coalitions, all losing by definition, or whether they remain on their own, is left indeterminate in the theory: they will do whatever keeps their loss at a minimum. The important thing is that for the purposes of the theory a coalition structure is sufficiently characterized by its winning coalition. In most cases, the assumption is made that this winning coalition has succeeded in “completely defeating” its opponents, *i.e.* holding them down to the amount they would obtain if each remained on his own<sup>2</sup>. In that case, the game is completely characterized by an enumeration of all winning coalitions and their values.

In a game with  $n$  actors, there exist  $2^n$  different combinations, or coalitions, of actors, including the empty coalition. Since the complement of any winning coalition is a losing coalition (and the complement of any blocking coalition is another blocking coalition), a losing coalition corresponds to each winning one. Ruling out blocking coalitions, there must be as many winning coalitions as there are losing coalitions: half of  $2^n$ , *i.e.*  $2^{n-1}$  coalitions, are winning.

The coalitions that may be expected to form will certainly be winning coalitions. The task at hand is to specify conditions and criteria that allow the number of winning coalitions that may be expected to form to be restricted.

### 1. Minimal winning coalitions: Von Neumann and Morgenstern

The authors of *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* paid much attention to a specific class of  $n$ -person constant-sum games, called “simple games”, and characterized by the property that the value of winning coalitions does not increase when new

members are added. Or, a winning coalition,  $T$ , will not have a larger value,  $v(T)$ , than its subset,  $S$ , if  $S$  is also winning.

$$v(S) + v(-S) = v(N) \quad (\text{constant-sum condition})$$

and

$$v(S) \geq v(T) \text{ if, and only if, } S \leq T; S, T \in w(S)$$

A coalition is considered “losing” when its members cannot improve their position, either by staying on their own or by forming coalitions of losers: they are completely defeated. The complement of such a losing coalition in the simple game is a winning coalition. Of course, any superset of a winning coalition is again winning, any subset of a losing coalition is a losing coalition.

These simple games have a number of attractive properties for formal as well as empirical analysis. Most important in the first respect is the existence of a class of coalitions,  $W^m$ , the set of “minimal winning coalitions”. The solution of the simple games consists of those imputations for which the minimal winning coalitions are effective, the “main simple solution”.

On the other hand, simple games bear a resemblance to some situations in real life that are very relevant to the present purpose: a majority coalition in a voting body may conquer some fixed “prize”, *e.g.* the cabinet portfolios and this “prize” may be considered the same, independent of the composition of the winning coalition that acquires it: the value of the coalition does not increase with its membership. The correspondence between simple games and these actual situations is fortunate, but not coincidental.

“In this connection we emphasize again that any game is a model of a possible social or economic organization and any solution is a possible stable standard of behavior in it.”<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that simple games may be visualized in different ways, all formally equivalent but involving very different images of the corresponding real-life situation. Two versions are especially important in this context. Von Neumann and Morgenstern present their analysis of simple games in the “reduced form”, or, in “-1,0 normalization”. The value assigned\* to every (losing) one-man coalition  $\{i\}$  is -1. All losing coalitions are completely

\*Since utilities are defined up to a linear transformation only, a constant may be added to the utility scale of each actor, and the values of all coalitions may be multiplied by another constant.

defeated and therefore “flat”; therefore, a losing coalition with  $p$  members has a value of  $p \cdot (-1) = -p$ . The value of the coalition of all actors  $N$ , (and of the coalition of no actors,  $\emptyset$ ) is set equal to zero:  $v(N) = v(\emptyset) = 0$ . The game is zero-sum. In a game with  $n$  members, therefore, the value of a winning coalition  $S$ , with  $(n-p)$  members, equals the amount that the  $p$  losers have to give up:  $p$ . Thus as the number of losers  $p$  decreases, the number of members  $(n-p)$  in the winning coalition  $S$  increases and its value,  $v(S)$  does not increase, but decreases. The condition of simple games is satisfied.

This version of the simple game may be compared to a situation in which all players put the same amount, 1, at stake and the winning coalition takes all.

However, the simple game may also be visualized as a game about the division of a given amount  $c$  ( $c = 1$ ). The value of being in a one-man coalition may be set equal to zero,  $v(\{i\}) = 0$ , and, because of the condition of complete defeat, this is the value of all losing coalitions. The coalition of all actors will have a value equal to  $c$ , or 1. The game is constant-sum. The value of a winning coalition,  $S$ , and its complement,  $-S$ , must sum to the value of the coalition of all actors:  $v(S) = v(N) - v(-S) = 1 - 0 = 1$ . All winning coalitions have the value 1. This is the simple game in “0, 1 normalization”. Again, as the membership of the winning coalition increases, its value does not increase, but it remains the same. The condition of simple games is again satisfied. In the 0,1 normalization, the simple game conveys a resemblance to the situation in a parliamentary voting body where the opposition has no control over the government departments and the majority coalition acquires all cabinet portfolios.

Clearly, even though the two games are formally identical — they are “strategically equivalent” — their psychological features are very different.

Once a coalition is winning, the addition of a new member will not increase its value but the other members will have to share the same or a smaller value with the newcomer. Clearly, actors will strive to form winning coalitions that do not contain more actors than those necessary to win. An actor  $i$  without whose votes or weight a coalition  $S$  would also be winning is called an “unnecessary actor”:  $w_S - w_i \geq m$  ( $i \in S$ ). A coalition without unnecessary actors is called a “minimal winning coalition”: a winning coalition, such that the subtraction of any single actor would render it losing. A minimal winning coalition  $S$  belongs to the “minimal

winning set"  $W^m$ , and the coalitions in this set are expected to form\*

$$S \in W^m \text{ if and only if } w_s \geq m > w_s - w_i \text{ for all } i \in S \quad (1)$$

This solution applies under the restrictions of the constant-sum condition and the defining condition of simple games that the value of winning coalitions will not increase with their membership. It is not unrealistic to apply these conditions in the analysis of certain parliamentary situations. This "minimal winning theory" will be tested against historical data of European parliamentary coalitions in Part II of this book.

## 2. Coalitions of minimum size: Riker and Gamson

In situations that resemble simple games, minimal winning coalitions are predicted to form. But some persuasive rule that could restrict this predicted set further would, of course, be very attractive. Such a criterion has been suggested by Gamson (1962) and also by Riker (1962). It will be defined as follows: from among all winning coalitions, those are expected to form that have the smallest weight. Or, a coalition is of minimum size if, and only if\*

$$S \in w(S) \quad \text{and} \quad w_s \leq w_T \quad \text{for all } T \in w(S) \quad (2)$$

Of course, a coalition  $S$  that is of minimum size must also be minimal winning. If the minimum size coalition  $S$  were *not* minimal winning, then it would contain an unnecessary actor  $i$ , so that the coalition without  $i$ , the coalition  $\{S-i\}$  would also be winning. But the coalition  $\{S-i\}$  would have a smaller weight than the coalition  $S$ : the coalition  $S$  would not be of minimum size, unless it contained no unnecessary actor  $i$ , *i.e.* unless it was, in fact, minimal winning. But, conversely, a coalition can be minimal winning without being of minimum size.

It may be noted that in games where all actors have an equal vote<sup>†</sup>, the minimal winning coalitions contain exactly  $m$  actors and all coalitions with  $m$  actors are minimal winning coalitions: every additional vote is unnecessary, one vote less would make the coalition losing. Thus, in games among actors of equal weight, the minimal winning coalitions are also the coalitions with the smallest weight or number of votes,  $w_s$ .

\*For an example, see the Glossary of Technical Terms.

†Such simple games are called "symmetric simple games".

When actors have unequal weights\*, this is not necessarily the case; coalitions may not have the smallest weight among winning coalitions and yet such coalitions may be minimal winning. Consider, for example, the three-person game with actors  $i, j, k$ , and with weights  $w_i = 25$ ,  $w_j = 35$  and  $w_k = 40$  and, as a consequence, with the majority requirement,  $m = 51$ . All two-person coalitions are minimal winning; without either member they would be losing. Only the coalition of all three actors is not minimal winning, since it can do without any one of its members. Among the three minimal winning coalitions, the coalition  $i&j$  has the smallest weight; it is the minimum size coalition.

In the literature, these minimum size coalitions have not always been properly distinguished from the minimal winning coalitions<sup>4</sup>. There has been some confusion about the meaning and derivation of the minimum size principle which has most often been attributed to Riker. However, the minimum size principle may have been applied with great insight to political life by Riker but he has never adequately derived it. For games of actors with equal weight, *e.g.* individual players with one vote each, the set of minimum size coalitions is identical to that of minimal winning coalitions. The problem is to show that for games of actors of unequal weight the coalition of smallest weight, that is, the minimum size coalition, is most likely to form among all minimal winning coalitions.

In *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, Riker (1962) begins with a defense of the application of the zero-sum condition to the study of political life. Especially in societies that have a high degree of organization, the business of politics is carried on by fiduciaries who consider it their moral duty to defend the interest of their clientele to the exclusion of all other interests; they are true "maximizers". They will attempt to realize the outcome that is maximal in terms of "money or power or success". This definition does lift the utility concept out of its purely tautological state but it is not yet an operational definition: how to compare outcomes, when one of them yields more "money" and the other more "power", or how to measure "power" at all?

The term "success" risks throwing the definition back into tautology since it may mean "favorable or satisfactory outcome or result"<sup>5</sup> but it also has the more restricted meaning of "wealth, fame, rank etc."

\*Such simple games are called "weighted majority games".

The "size principle" is introduced for the first time in the following wording<sup>6</sup>.

"In  $n$ -person zero-sum games, where sidepayments are allowed, where players are rational, and where they have perfect information, only minimum winning coalitions occur."

This statement is translated into a descriptive statement about the "natural world"<sup>7</sup>.

"In social situations similar to  $n$ -person, zero-sum games with sidepayments, participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will ensure winning and no larger".

The definition of the game at this point is not restricted to simple games. A "minimum winning coalition" is defined as "one which is rendered blocking or losing by the subtraction of any member"<sup>8</sup>, *i.e.* the same definition as "minimal winning coalition" in this book except that here blocking coalitions have been ruled out.

It may be remembered that a game is considered a simple game only if a coalition  $T$ , which contains a coalition  $S$  as a subset ( $S \in T$ ), does not have a larger value than this coalition  $S$ :  $v(T) \leq v(S)$ . Or, in simple games, the value of a coalition does not increase as its weight or membership increases. In a game where all actors have an equal vote, the weight,  $w_s$ , of a coalition is entirely determined by the number of its members. (If no players are considered "special" for some reason, the game is called "symmetric".) Thus, the various coalitions  $S$ , with increasing number of members, might be plotted on the abscissa and the values of the corresponding coalitions on the vertical axis: the characteristic function of a simple game would be graphically represented by a curve that would have no upward slope to the left (no increase in  $v(S)$  as membership in  $S$  increases) at any point over its entire length. Thus, as new actors are added, the value of the coalitions that have been extended in that manner does not increase. On the other hand, when the curve does show an upward left slope over part of its length, the game is not simple.

Riker argues at this point that "natural situations" which exhibit such non-simple features, *i.e.* in which a coalition has a larger value than its subset which is also winning, "in concrete reality are probably nonexistent". In such games actors would continue to add new members to the coalition over and above those needed for a majority (because the larger coalition could secure larger gains). "The condition is extraordinarily restrictive."<sup>9</sup> But that is

not quite the point. What matters is whether a definition that *excludes* such non-minimal winning coalitions with larger values, as does the definition of the simple game, is unduly restrictive. It appears that the restriction in the definition of simple games is reasonably plausible. But there exist "natural social situations" that contradict it. For example, the parliamentary game may be conceived as a game about the distribution of cabinet portfolios, thus satisfying the constant-sum condition. It may be redefined as a game, equally constant-sum, about the distribution of cabinet portfolios *and* seats in parliamentary committees. A simple majority is sufficient to capture the cabinet portfolios, but a larger majority, say two-thirds of the membership of parliament, may be in a position to oust the remaining opposition from the parliamentary committees\*.

A second example may be taken from gang or tribal warfare over the control of a given territory, its installations and population. A minimal winning coalition could take the territory and its inhabitants with their possessions only after heavy warfare and costly destruction. A large coalition could, by a mere threat, take the territory without any damage to installations or loss of life among its population. The spoils of the large coalition would be greater.

"My informants in Buganda told me that men relished war in the old days, and this seems to me very likely. Under such conditions, a party is likely to be coerced by the threat of battle only when defeat seems almost certain. Probably, then, something approaching a two-thirds majority would be required to win by threat of battle."<sup>10</sup>

These examples should be distinguished from situations in which a two-thirds coalition can change the rules of the game, *e.g.* by constitutional amendments, or where it can realize gains that do not correspond to a loss for the loser, *e.g.* because to each party the cost of warfare is spared †.

\*Something like this seems to have happened when Communists were excluded from major parliamentary committee-work in the French Fourth Republic, 1951. See Williams (1966) p. 258.

†Riker (1962) remarks: "There may exist in nature some situations that display these features, but if they do exist, they are so rare and obscure that one who has searched diligently to find them has been unable to do so." (*op. cit.*, p. 45) A situation in which a coalition gains more than its subset which is also winning, may not be so obscure or rare but often it may be more profitably studied as a non-constant-sum game.

In the appendix ("Derivation of the Size Principle") to his book, Riker demonstrates how some common rules for the division of payoffs among the members of the winning coalition lead to paradoxical results for those coalitions that contradict the condition of the simple game and this serves as an added argument to exclude such situations from consideration.

In Chapter 5 of *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, Riker makes the explicit assumption that

"all characteristic functions slope downward and to the right (that is, assuming none are parallel to the abscissa except at zero)."<sup>11</sup>

This amounts to the condition for simple games in  $-1,0$  normalization. In the same chapter, Riker introduces actors of *unequal* weight, "proto-coalitions", made up of the individual players in the voting body.

"It is to be understood that these proto-coalitions are, for the purposes of the present analysis, indivisible units even though they may be composed of many individual players."<sup>12</sup>

At this stage of the analysis, therefore, the subject matter has been restricted to simple games and, moreover, the argument deals with games among actors of unequal weight, the "proto-coalitions". For actors with unequal weight it has been shown that not all minimal winning coalitions are also of minimum size. An additional argument is therefore necessary to derive the prediction of these minimum size coalitions.

In Chapter 5 of his book, Riker singles out the "uniquely preferable winning coalition" as especially likely to form. Such a coalition (1) "has a greater value than any other one possible...."; (2) "it is one in which all the participating proto-coalitions can satisfy their initial expectations." The initial expectation of an actor is the highest amount he can obtain in the best "non-minimal" coalition of which he could be a member<sup>13</sup>.

In the argument that follows, a three-person game is presented with three "proto-coalitions",  $P^3$ ,  $Q^3$  and  $R^3$ , with weights  $w_p > w_q > w_r$ , such that no actor is winning on his own but any two of them are\*.

\*" $P^3$ ,  $Q^3$ , and  $R^3$ " indicate that  $P$ ,  $Q$ , and  $R$  are proto-coalitions in a partition of the set of all players in three subsets.

"By reason of the size principle, the values of these coalitions are related thus:

$$\text{If } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} v(Q^3 \cup R^3) = a = -v(P^3) \\ v(P^3 \cup R^3) = b = -v(Q^3) \\ v(P^3 \cup Q^3) = c = -v(R^3) \end{array} \right\} \quad \text{then } a > b > c."^{14}$$

Note that the weights of coalitions  $Q&R$ ,  $P&R$  and  $P&Q$  decrease in that order.

First, whatever the "size principle" may imply at this point, it does *not* imply that the values of the coalitions decrease with their weight.

If, however, the postulated relationship between values and weights is accepted, for the time being, then the coalition of  $Q$  and  $R$  satisfies the first property of a uniquely preferable winning coalition: it has the largest value. Can it also satisfy the initial expectations of its members,  $Q$  and  $R$ ? The initial expectation of  $Q$  appears to be the most  $Q$  can obtain in the "nonminimal"\* coalition of  $Q$  and  $P$ , *i.e.* the entire value of that coalition, the amount  $c$ . Similarly, the most  $R$  can obtain in a "nonminimal" coalition is the entire value of the coalition of  $P$  and  $R$ , the amount  $b$ . Now, the coalition with largest value, the coalition of  $Q$  and  $R$ , should be in a position to guarantee  $b$  to  $R$  and  $c$  to  $Q$ . It has at its disposal the amount  $a$ . It can satisfy the initial expectations of its members if  $a \geq (b + c)$ . But this relationship "is, of course, determined by the shape of the curve of the characteristic function"<sup>14</sup>.

The requirement that  $a \geq (b + c)$  is a very restrictive condition: the "uniquely preferable winning coalition" exists only in special cases; the minimum size coalition is uniquely preferable only under these conditions.

However, the preliminary statement, that according to the size principle the value of coalitions decreases with their weight, can not be accepted, unless an additional premise is explicitly adopted: it must be assumed then that the value of a coalition is a function of its weight. (Note that the condition of simple games states only that the value of a coalition does not increase with its membership.)

It might be argued that the weight of a coalition is determined

\*The expression is Riker's. If proto-coalitions are indissoluble, only an entire proto-coalition can be excluded from the coalition and without any such a proto-coalition the coalitions under consideration would be losing. In that sense they are minimal and not "nonminimal".

by the weight of its component proto-coalitions, which in turn is determined by the number of individual players — with one vote each — that are contained in each proto-coalition. When individual players, instead of proto-coalitions, are considered the actors of the game, the argument would continue along familiar lines: since each losing individual player has to give up an equal amount, the coalition that excludes the greatest number of individual players, that is, the coalition of minimum size, collects the greatest amount, or, has the greatest value. But in this manner the game has been reduced to one among equally weighted individual players instead of among unequally weighted proto-coalitions. In that case, all coalitions would continue to exclude individual players until their weight had been cut down to the minimum, *i.e.* to exactly the size  $m$ . Only if by coincidence the weights of some proto-coalitions happened to sum to exactly this amount  $m$ , would they be maintained in their entirety in the minimum size coalition. In all other cases, the proto-coalitions would play no role. If, on the other hand, proto-coalitions are accepted as the (indissoluble) actors of the game, it does not follow from the condition of simple games that their value decreases with their weight once they are winning.

Moreover, for a voting body with  $n$  equally weighted players (*e.g.* one man, one vote) and a majority criterion  $m$ , there exists  $n!/(n-m)!m!$  coalitions that are minimal winning and of minimum size. In a voting body of 11 members, where six would control a majority, there would be 462 different six-man coalitions, all minimal winning, all of minimum size! For an assembly with some hundreds of members this would yield a rather unwieldy predicted set. The introduction of parliamentary groups in an assembly, and of proto-coalitions in the theory, serves the same purpose, to make the outcomes more predictable. That is the reason why unequally weighted actors (that may be thought of as sets of unequal numbers of individual players who have an equal vote each) are introduced as the proto-coalitions in Riker's theory.

In this stage of Riker's analysis, however, the actors in the game are apparently the indissoluble proto-coalitions made up of firmly committed individual players. These proto-coalitions may form coalitions in which individual players may be "unnecessary" in the sense that without them the coalition would still be winning. But as long as the proto-coalitions remain indissoluble, these redundant individual players will not be excluded. In the next stage of his argument, Riker discards the assumption of indissolubility of

proto-coalitions because "in a dynamic world, this is, of course, absurd"<sup>15</sup>.

Riker argues then that proto-coalitions which together form some minimal winning coalition from which no proto-coalition can be missed, will now exclude those individual players which are no longer necessary: as the condition of indissolubility of proto-coalitions is lifted, the "actor" in the analysis is no longer the proto-coalition, but again the individual player, and the game is no more among unequally weighted proto-coalitions but among equally weighted individual players. However, since in this "dynamic" model the "history" of coalition-building is taken into account, the argument produces more specific results. Not just any coalition of  $m$  individual players is expected to form, but some coalition of the minimum size  $m$  that originated as a coalition of proto-coalitions which was "uniquely preferable" (if there was one); this uniquely preferable coalition of proto-coalitions thereupon proceeds to exclude the individual players that can be missed.

The objection is that once individual players know that coalitions of proto-coalitions can always be cut down again to minimum size, the proto-coalitions will never be regarded as indissoluble. It does not matter how much bigger than minimum size a coalition of proto-coalitions is, corrections can and will always be made: the theorist must again face the situation of  $n$  individual players with all their coalitional combinations.

If, on the other hand, proto-coalitions must be considered as definitely indissoluble (which is not so absurd in a world with party discipline), then these proto-coalitions must be considered as the true actors in the game. In that case  $v(\{i\})$  is not the value of what a losing individual player  $i$  has to give up, but of what a losing proto-coalition  $\{i\}$  must give up and  $v(\{i\})$  is the same amount for each proto-coalition  $\{i\}$ . In this view,  $Q\&R$ ,  $Q\&P$ ,  $P\&R$  are all minimal winning and an additional assumption is necessary to single out any one of them as especially likely to form. This is the task of Riker's assumption that actors (proto-coalitions) will want to satisfy their "initial expectations", an assumption introduced at a stage of the analysis when proto-coalitions were still regarded as indissoluble. Under those assumptions\* the "uniquely preferable winning coalition" is expected to form.

\*That is, if it is accepted that the value of a coalition is a function of the number of individual players in a game with indissoluble proto-coalitions.

In the appendix ("Derivation of the Size Principle") to Riker's book, it is again demonstrated that, when the curve of the characteristic function at no point shows an upward-left slope (*i.e.* under the conditions of the simple game), and when players are of equal weight, the coalitions with the smallest number of players will form, *i.e.* the coalitions of smallest weight or: the predicted set is the set of coalitions of minimum size, which, in the case of equally weighted players is identical to the set  $W^m$  of minimal winning coalitions. In so far as the "derivation" applies to players of *unequal* weight, it demonstrates that unnecessary actors will be excluded from the coalition, *i.e.* only minimal winning coalitions will form; but it does not follow that only minimal winning coalitions of minimum size (smallest weight) will emerge when players are weighted unequally.

All this follows directly from the definition of the set  $W^m$  for simple games as advanced by Von Neumann and Morgenstern; no separate minimum size principle, that would allow a further restriction of this set  $W^m$ , has been derived.

In a later article, Riker (1966) makes the assumption that all players are "equally weighted persons". As has been shown for the simple game, in that case the set of minimum size coalitions is identical to the set of minimal winning coalitions  $W^m$ . The purpose of Riker's argument in this article is to show that even if the constant-sum game is *not* simple, *i.e.* when the characteristic function shows an upward slope over at least part of its length, only minimal winning coalitions are to be expected. In such case, there may exist two winning coalitions  $S$  and  $T$ , such that  $v(S) < v(T)$  and  $S \subset T$ . There also exist some player(s),  $h$ , that are part of  $T$  and not of  $S$ , such that  $T = (S + h)$ . When these players  $h$  receive more in  $T$  than  $v(T) - v(S)$ , there is no incentive for the members of  $S$  to join the players  $h$  in  $T$ . But if the players  $h$  receive less in  $T$  than this difference  $v(T) - v(S)$ , then the members of  $S$  share in the increment and have a reason to bring about  $T$  together with the players  $h$ .

At this point<sup>16</sup>, Riker argues that the members of  $-T$  will not let this pass. If  $S$  forms, its members would demand the amount  $v(S)$  from the losers, *i.e.* from the players in  $-S$ , who include the players  $h$ . When  $T$  is about to form, with the cooperation of players  $h$ , the remaining outsiders,  $-T$ , stand to lose a larger amount,  $v(-T)$ , to be paid by a smaller number of losers. They will therefore be ready to bid up to the amount of their additional loss,  $v(-S) - v(-T)$ , to keep the players  $h$  from joining with those

in  $S$  to form  $T$ . This amount, by the zero-sum condition, equals  $v(T) - v(S)$ . Since the players  $h$  would receive less than  $v(T) - v(S)$  if they would join  $T$ , they will accept the bid by the members of  $-T$  and stay out of the coalition  $T$ . If the players  $h$  would receive exactly the amount  $v(T) - v(S)$  as members of  $T$ ,  $T$  would still not be "realizable" (or, expected to form); Riker defines a "realizable" coalition as one in which all members do *better* than in a smaller coalition and *at least as well* as in a larger one<sup>17</sup>. In this case, when the players  $h$  take the entire value increment,  $v(T) - v(S)$ , the members of  $S$  are not *better* off in the larger coalition  $T$  than in the coalition  $S$ . Riker's conclusion is that, regardless of the shape of the characteristic function, minimal winning coalitions will form when the constant-sum condition is satisfied.

There are several objections to this argument. First, the players  $h$  receive part of the value of coalition  $T$ , whether that part is visualized as a bid from the outsiders in  $-T$  or as an offer from the members of  $S$ . It depends very much on the definition of "coalition" whether or not  $h$  should be considered a member of  $T$  or not when the value of  $T$  is, in fact, realized and acquired by  $S$  and  $h$ , and  $(S + h) = T$ . Secondly, the asymmetry in the definition of a "realizable" coalition that must guarantee its members *more* than a smaller coalition and *at least as much* as a larger one, appears somewhat arbitrary. If the members of  $S$  are equally well off in  $T$ , they might stay in  $T$ , once it formed, even though  $T$  is not minimal winning. Thirdly, there is some danger in an argument that singles out the "last added" actors  $h$  as especially likely to receive the increment  $v(T) - v(S)$ \*. It gives rise to a similar debate as has occurred in economics around the attribution of a marginal increase in profit to the last added unit of a production factor or, a calculation of the cost of an added unit of product on the basis of the marginal cost for producing it<sup>18</sup>. As a matter of fact, in the present case, the argument can be turned against itself to prove that no minimal winning coalition will ever come about.

If the coalition  $T$  is a minimal winning coalition,  $w_T = m$ , and the coalition  $S$  is a smaller coalition, which is therefore losing, and if the members of  $S$  can form  $T$  with the aid of some player(s)  $h$ ,

\*The Shapley value of a game to a single actor,  $h$ , is also computed on the basis of this value increment  $v(T) - v(S)$ , for  $T = S + h$ . But, in this case the assumption is that the sequence in which  $h$  enters  $T$  is entirely random and the increments brought about by  $h$  are weighted for the probabilities that  $h$  is the 1st, 2nd, ..., or  $n$ th actor to join in. The condition of independence of labelling is explicitly imposed: *cf.* Luce and Raiffa (1957) p. 247.

then it is rational for the members of  $S$  to offer the players  $h$  any amount up to  $v(T) - v(S)$ , the difference in value between the two coalitions. The members of  $S$  cannot offer the players  $h$  the entire amount  $v(T) - v(S)$ , since the members of  $S$  must be better off in the larger coalition  $T$ , for it to be realizable. The members of  $-T$  will, according to the argument, offer the players  $h$  anything up to and including  $v(T) - v(S)$  and as a result  $h$  will not join in  $T$ . No minimal winning coalitions will form but the players  $h$  will receive the entire amount  $v(T) - v(S)$ . Congratulations  $h!$  Riker's argument is self-defeating.

Riker has offered some very persuasive arguments for restricting investigations to those constant-sum games that are simple\*. When, in simple games, all players are of equal weight, the predicted set consists of all coalitions that have just enough members to be winning and no more, *i.e.* the coalitions of minimum size, which are at the same time the minimal winning coalitions. When actors are of unequal weight, Riker has suggested that the uniquely preferable winning coalition is especially likely to form when (1) values of coalitions decrease with their weight, (2) actors strive to satisfy their initial expectation and (3) there exists a coalition of minimum size that has a value great enough to satisfy those initial expectations. If the game may be considered, in last analysis, as one among individual players of equal weight, coalitions made up of proto-coalitions that are of unequal weight may be expected to oust individual players until they have reached minimum size in terms of individual players.

Riker's arguments do not add up to the derivation of some "minimum size principle" that is distinct from the concept of minimal winning coalitions and that is defined for a specific class of games†. The definition of the minimum size principle given at

\*The author apparently identifies only  $-1, 0$  simple games as simple, ignoring the fact that all linear transformations of such games are "strategically equivalent", among them those in  $0, 1$  normalization. This misinterpretation may be the cause of much of the confusion. In his most recent publication (with Ordeshook (1973)), *An Introduction to Positive Political Theory*, Riker makes a more modest claim for the validity of the size principle in non-simple constant-sum games: "We also offer some arguments to show that it holds — but, since in this category we are forced to rely in part on an argument from organizational costs, we regard this demonstration as less powerful" (*op. cit.* p.182). For the simple games, the analysis proceeds again in terms of individual actors with a single vote each. *Cf.* also Butterworth (1971), Riker (1971). †The first to make the point in print, and very succinctly, was Michael Leiserson: "Riker says 'weights', but in his own applications uses member-

the beginning of this section will be maintained and investigated further: only coalitions of minimum size will form, that is coalition  $S$ , such that  $S \in w(S)$  and  $w_S \leq w_T$ , for all  $T \in w(S)$ .

That these coalitions of minimum size are predicted in the case of simple games with equally weighted actors, followed immediately from the definition of minimal winning coalitions, which is in that case identical with that of coalitions of minimum size. For simple games with actors of unequal weight, an additional assumption is necessary. For the empirical study of coalitions, the assumption was advanced for the first time by Gamson:

"Any participant will expect others to demand from a coalition a share of the payoff proportional to the amount of resources which they contribute to a coalition."<sup>19</sup>

Hence, players will attempt to maximize their "pro rata" gain, *i.e.* the proportion of the value of a coalition to its weight ( $v(S)/w_S$ ).

"Thus, where the payoff is held constant, he will favor the *cheapest winning coalition*."<sup>19</sup>

Or, in other words, in simple games in  $0, 1$  normalization, where all coalitions have a constant value,  $v(S) = 1$ , the winning coalitions with the fewest resources, *i.e.* the smallest weight,  $w_S$ , are the coalitions expected to form, *i.e.* the coalitions of minimum size.

This holds true for all simple games. For example, when the game is in  $-1, 0$  normalization, the amount that a losing player is forced to give up is  $v(i) = -1$ . Accordingly, in a winning coalition of  $n-p$  members,  $p$  players are excluded and they must give up the amount  $p$ , which is the value of the winning coalition:  $v(S) = p$ . The members of  $S$ , if they had not been in the winning coalition, would have had to give up an amount 1 each, or together,  $(n-p)$ . Thus together they stand to gain the amount  $p - (-(n-p)) = n$ . Now, when actors are unequally weighted, it may be that some minimal winning coalition has more (small) members than another minimal winning coalition and, yet, none of them is unnecessary. If the gains are divided proportionally to the weights of the members, it does not matter how many members are in the winning coalition as long as they are all necessary. What matters is that the weight of the minimal winning coalition is minimal, so that the pro rata gain is the highest possible; *i.e.*  $n/w_S$  is maximal when  $w_S$  is minimal.

ships. (If Riker's weights are the same as  $N-M$ 's weights, then his theory is no different from their's.)" Leiserson (1968) p. 784.

Thus the minimum size principle states that, in simple games, those coalitions will be stable that yield their members the highest payoff in proportion to their weight,  $w_i$ .

In simple games these are the coalitions  $S$  of minimum size, such that:

$$\begin{aligned} & S \in w(S) \text{ and } w_S \leq w_T, \text{ for all } T \in w(S) & (3) \\ \text{Moreover: } & v(S) + v(-S) = v(N) \quad (\text{constant-sum condition}) \\ \text{and: } & v(S) \geq v(T) \text{ if and only if } S \in T; S, T \in w(S) \\ & \hspace{15em} (\text{simple games}) \end{aligned}$$

This “minimum size principle”, that only coalitions of minimal weight (size) will form in simple games, will be tested against the data.

When actors are of unequal weight, there may be only very few coalitions that are of minimum size. The principle generates a very precise prediction that is very sensitive to slight variations in the membership (weight) of parliamentary groups. Moreover, as Riker has argued, actors may not know exactly which other actors have committed themselves to the coalition and how many votes each actor may be trusted to deliver. Information will not always be “perfect and complete”. In order to make sure, coalition leaders may add members over and above the minimum size. This is called the “information effect”.

“The greater the degree of imperfection or incompleteness of information, the larger will be the coalitions that coalition-makers seek to form and the more frequently will winning coalitions actually formed be greater than minimum size.”<sup>20</sup>

The information effect cannot easily be estimated in real life situations; “this one change renders verification extraordinarily difficult”. Coalitions of larger than minimum size may either be interpreted as a result of the information effect coupled to the operation of the minimum size principle, or, as evidence against that minimum size principle.

A very rough control for this information effect has been incorporated in another proposition tested in this study, “the two-thirds criterion”: winning coalitions that are “large” will not form in simple games. A “large coalition” is one that controls more than two thirds of all the votes in a voting body that votes by absolute majority *i.e.*  $(n + 1)/2 \leq m \leq (n/2) + 1$ .

The implicit assumption is that, if both the minimum size principle and the information effect operate, the latter will cause coalitions

to be larger than minimum size but not “very much larger”, that is, not “large”, as defined here.

The choice of the specific criterion is necessarily somewhat arbitrary:  $w_S < 4m/3$ . Or, a coalition with  $w_S \geq 4m/3$  is large. In order to get a rough idea of the working of the information effect upon the minimum size principle, this “two-thirds criterion” will be tested against the data: in simple games only those coalitions  $S$  will form for which it is true that

$$m \leq w_S < \frac{4}{3}m \quad (4)$$

### 3. The Bargaining Proposition: Leiserson

It has been noted that in simple games with actors of unequal weight, minimal winning coalitions may differ in the number of members as long as all its members are necessary for a coalition to be winning. In a study on coalition formation and maintenance in Japan, Leiserson has advanced a “bargaining proposition” for simple games.

“The proposition regarding bargaining is that as the number of actors increases there is a tendency for each actor to prefer to form a minimal winning coalition with as few members as possible.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, again, a subset of the set  $W^m$  of minimal winning coalitions in simple games has been singled out as especially likely to form: the set of (minimal) winning coalitions with the smallest number of members\*.

Clearly, when actors are weighted equally, all minimal winning coalitions are not only of minimum size, but they also have the smallest number of members,  $m$ , among all winning coalitions. When, however, actors’ weights are not equal, one minimal winning coalition may have more members than another. And, whether actors’ weights are equal or not, when a winning coalition has the smallest number of members among all winning coalitions, it certainly is a minimal winning coalition.

Von Neumann and Morgenstern found<sup>22</sup> that the coalitional possibilities of many simple games could be expressed by assigning a single set of weights to the actors. For example, in the simple

\*For an example, see the Glossary of Technical Terms.

majority game of three persons, in which no actor holds a majority on his own, any two-person coalition is minimal winning. This may be represented by assigning to all three actors a weight  $w_i = 1$ . Every two-person coalition is minimal winning and has a weight  $w_S = 2$ . Since it is true for all three-person simple games that any two-person coalition is minimal winning, all these games may be described by assigning the set of weights 1,1,1 to the actors.

If blocking coalitions are ruled out or, in other words, if only "strong" simple games are considered, the weights may be chosen in such a fashion that all minimal winning coalitions end up with the same weight,  $w_S$ . Weights that satisfy this requirement are called "homogeneous". The strong simple four-person game may be described in all its coalitional possibilities by the set of homogeneous weights 1,1,1,2. In such games there will be a coalition of three small actors (with  $w_S = 3$ ) or three coalitions of a large actor with any one of the small players (with  $w_S = 3$ ); these are the minimal winning coalitions. Since there can be no blocking coalitions, not all actors can have the same weight; if the largest actor is assigned the weight 2, equal weights may be assigned to the three smaller ones and yet all coalitional possibilities are reflected by this set of weights.

The five-person simple game may be described in its coalitional possibilities by four sets of homogeneous weights. Already in the six-person simple game, however, some coalitional combinations can only be expressed by weights that are not homogeneous: some minimal winning coalitions end up with a larger weight than others.

In his study of Japanese diet politics, Leiserson has made use of this property of simple games, that a few sets of homogeneous weights may describe all or most coalitional combinations. The strength of factions in the diet cannot always be established with certainty and precision. Moreover, "intangible" factors, such as financial backing, play a role in the formation process. However, a rough and impressionistic idea of the "weights" of these factions may be obtained. This permits the selection of the set of homogeneous weights that best approximates these relations of strength and the assignment of these weights to the actors in the game<sup>23</sup>.

The bargaining proposition as advanced by Leiserson asserts that, especially as the number of actors increases, coalitions will form that are minimal and winning and that consist of the smallest possible number of members (such as the factions in the Japanese diet). For example, in the four-person game, the coalition of the

actor with  $w_i = 2$  together with  $w_j = 1$  is more likely to form than the coalition, equally minimal winning, of the three actors each with  $w_j = 1$ : the former unites only two actors, the latter embraces three.

Leiserson does not attempt to derive his proposition in systematic fashion. "In time it may be possible to integrate these propositions into the....theory, but at present they are merely qualifications of the basic theory."<sup>24</sup> Instead, an argument is offered that should justify the bargaining proposition on intuitive grounds.

"The members of the smaller coalition will prefer to form it, since negotiations and bargaining are easier to complete and a coalition is easier to hold together, other things being equal, with fewer parties."<sup>25</sup>

The version of the bargaining proposition that is tested in this study makes no use of homogeneous weights but adopts, instead, the number of parliamentary seats controlled by an actor as an indicator of the weight of that actor. This should not cause divergences in the predictions of the bargaining proposition since no coalitional combinations are lost in the transition to homogeneous weights. However, blocking coalitions do sometimes occur and this may make for very slight distortions.

The number of actors in a coalition  $S$  may be written as " $m_S$ ". The bargaining proposition, tested in the second part of this book, asserts that in simple games those (minimal) winning coalitions will form, for which it is true that

$$S \in w(S) \text{ and } m_S \leq m_T \text{ for all } T \in w(S) \quad (5)$$

When evaluating the results of the empirical tests of this proposition, it must be taken into account that the described tendency is assumed to operate more clearly when the number of actors is large.

In simple constant-sum games, minimal winning coalitions will form. Among those, according to the minimum size principle, the coalitions with the smallest weight,  $w_S$ , and according to the bargaining proposition, the coalitions with the smallest number of members,  $m_S$ , are expected to form. The two-thirds criterion exclude large coalitions. The theories of political coalitions that remain to be discussed contain an additional element: the policy preferences of actors. Such preferences will be characterized by a quantity  $p_i$ , that will be discussed next.

#### 4. Policy positions and the range of coalitions

With the introduction of some notion of policy preference, actors are no longer characterized by their weights,  $w_i$ , alone but also by some expression that indicates their location in a space of policy preferences. To simplify matters radically, it will be assumed that this space is one-dimensional and that the location of an actor may be described by a single number  $p$ , the most preferred policy, or the policy position, of an actor  $i$ .

The assumption that all relevant policy preferences may be subsumed in a single continuum is a very strong one. Its consequences for the empirical version of the theories will be discussed in Chapter 7. Once this assumption has been adopted, it is possible to make a weak assumption as to the nature of this single scale. The policy positions of the actors will be characterized by their sequence only:  $p_i$  is an ordinal number.

For each actor  $i$ ,  $i \in N$ , there is one and only one number  $p_i$ , indicating its most preferred policy or its policy position.

For any two actors  $i$  and  $j$ ,  $i, j \in N$ , either  $p_i \geq p_j$  or  $p_i \leq p_j$ . The order is defined between all pairs of actors: it is a complete order\*.

For any three actors,  $i, j, k$ ;  $i, j, k \in N$ , if  $p_i \geq p_j$  and  $p_j \geq p_k$ , then  $p_i \geq p_k$ . The order is transitive.

In order to derive the propositions necessary for the theories that are to be discussed, some concept of "distance" is needed†. Even when  $p$  is an ordinal variable, the distance between the policy positions of pairs of actors may be compared in certain cases.

\*In the computer program for calculating the predictions of the various theories, provision has been made for one pair of actors that "ties" on the policy scale, or more precisely, whose ranking towards all other actors is identical but whose ranking *vis a vis* one another is indeterminate. Thus, two actors  $k$  and  $l$  are said to "tie", when it is the case that for all actors  $i$  and  $j$ ,  $i, j \neq k, l$ ,  $p_i < p_k < p_j$ , if and only if  $p_i < p_l < p_j$ . For the pair  $k$  and  $l$ :  $p_k \not\geq p_l$ . With respect to  $k$  and  $l$ , the order is therefore not complete.

†The word "distance", used here in quotation marks, does not refer to the concept of a relation that exists between all objects under consideration and that may be expressed in a common unit of measurement. Rather, it refers to the notion that " $a$  is more similar to  $b$  than to  $c$  in some respect", and therefore " $a$  is further away from  $c$  than from  $b$ ", or, "more distant". It may be seen from the rest of the argument that the notion of "distance" can be dispensed with entirely; its use may help understanding, however. See footnote on p. 69.

The "distance" between the policy positions of actors  $i$  and  $j$  is written as " $d(p_i, p_j)$ ".

$$\begin{aligned} \text{If } p_i \leq p_j \leq p_k, \text{ and only then } d(p_i, p_j) \leq d(p_i, p_k) & \quad (5) \\ \text{and } d(p_i, p_k) \geq d(p_j, p_k) & \\ \text{and } d(p_i, p_j) \geq d(p_j, p_k) & \end{aligned}$$

Or, the "distance" between an actor's policy position and the policy positions of actors on one side of him may be compared on the basis of the numbers  $p_i$  as defined. But, the "distance" between an actor's policy position and those of actors on either side of him cannot be compared on the basis of  $p_i$  as defined. The latter comparison will be called a "left-right comparison"; it is not defined when  $p_i$  is defined as an ordinal number but only when it is defined as an "ordered-metric"<sup>26</sup>.

The theories that are discussed in the next section make use of the concept of a coalition's "range", that is the "distance" between the two members of the coalition that are extreme, or furthest apart, on the policy scale.

An extreme actor in a coalition  $S$  is an actor  $l_S$  who has a policy position  $p_l$  that is more to the left than the policy position of any other actor in the coalition  $S$  or, an actor  $r_S$ , whose policy position is rightmost among the policy positions of the members of  $S$ . The policy positions of  $l_S$  and  $r_S$  are written as  $p_l^S$  and  $p_r^S$  respectively.

Thus for the extreme actors  $l_S$  and  $r_S$  in the coalition  $S$ , it is true that

$$p_l^S \leq p_i \text{ for all } i \in S, \text{ and } p_r^S \geq p_i \text{ for all } i \in S.$$

The "range of a coalition" may be written as " $D_S$ ", and it may now be defined as\*

\*It may now be seen that the "range of a coalition" may also be defined as "the pair of extreme members of a coalition". When the policy positions of the extreme pair ( $p_l^S, p_r^S$ ) of coalition  $S$  encompass the policy positions of the extreme pair of coalition  $T$  (coinciding or not at one or both extremes), then the policy positions of all members of  $T$  are encompassed by those of the extreme members of  $S$ . In that case,  $T$  is expected to form and  $S$  is not (*cf.* Section 5). These notions are captured efficiently by expressions such as "distance" or "range". Yet, such words carry with them the danger that it is not fully realized that only relations of order are defined. The situation may be compared to that of a set of traincars on a single track: they may be standing still or moving, some towards, some away from another, or maybe all in the same direction, some may be far apart, some close, but one thing cannot change on this single track: their order. And this knowledge makes the kind of statements that are being made in this section possible.

$$D_S = d(p_i^S, p_r^S).$$

The distances between the pairs of extreme members of coalitions  $S$  and  $T$ , or the range of coalitions  $S$  and  $T$ , may be compared under the following conditions.

$$D_S \geq D_T \text{ if and only if } p_i^S \leq p_i^T \leq p_r^T \leq p_r^S \quad (7)$$

or, conversely

$$D_S \leq D_T \text{ if and only if } p_i^T \leq p_i^S \leq p_r^S \leq p_r^T$$

Or, when the range of one coalition is contained (coinciding or not at one or both extremes) within the range of the other coalition, these ranges may be compared.

When the ranges overlap, or when they have no point in common, the ranges cannot be compared.

$$D_S \stackrel{?}{\geq} D_T \text{ if } p_i^S < p_i^T \leq p_r^S < p_r^T \text{ or if } p_i^S < p_r^S \leq p_i^T < p_r^T$$

All this follows immediately from the definition of  $p$  and  $d(p_i, p_j)$ .

Finally, a "closed coalition" will be defined as a coalition made up of actors that are adjacent on the policy scale. Thus, for any two actors  $i$  and  $k$  that are members of  $S$ , an actor  $j$  whose policy position is between those of  $i$  and  $k$  must also be a member of the closed coalition  $S$ .

$S$  is closed if, and only if, for any  $i, j, k$ , such that  $p_i < p_j < p_k$  and  $i, k \in S$ , also  $j \in S$ . If this is not the case, the coalition is not closed but "open": there exists an actor  $j$ , such that  $p_i < p_j < p_k$ , and  $i, k \in S$ , but  $j \notin S$ .

These definitions make it possible to discuss theories of political coalitions that take into account the policy positions of actors.

\*When one of a pair of tying actors,  $i$  and  $j$ , is an extreme member of the coalition  $S$ , e.g.  $p_i = p_i^S$ , it cannot be determined whether the policy position of the other tying actor,  $j$ , lies within or without the coalition's range, since the order of the policy positions of tying actors with respect to one another is indeterminate:  $p_j \stackrel{?}{\geq} p_i = p_i^S$ . When this actor  $j$  is not a member of the coalition  $S$ ,  $j \notin S$ , this in itself is not sufficient to consider the coalition  $S$  an open coalition, since it may be that  $p_j < p_i$ . If all actors whose policy positions are certainly within the range of the coalition are members, the coalition is counted as closed, whether  $j$  is a member or not. The class of open coalitions is eliminated from the predicted set in some theories. In cases of indeterminacy such as the present one, the class that is eliminated as "non-permissible" or "unstable" contains those coalitions that can be assigned to it with certainty; the indeterminate cases are assigned to the classes from which the predicted set is still to be selected as "permissible" or "stable" coalitions, that is "not certainly non-permissible or unstable". Likewise "closed" is defined as "not certainly open".

## 5. Minimal range theory: Leiserson and Axelrod

The preceding theories took into account the numbers and weights of actors but ignored their mutual compatibility\*. In his unpublished doctoral dissertation, *Coalitions in Politics*, Leiserson presented a theory that incorporated a notion of "ideological diversity" among the actors: players search for those coalitions which they expect to secure them at least some minimal satisfactory payoff and which unite actors of minimal ideological diversity.

For the purposes of testing his theory, Leiserson assumes that players will expect a good enough payoff only from winning coalitions,  $S$ ,  $S \in w(S)$ . Coalitions that are not winning are excluded from consideration. An actor  $i$  will survey all winning coalitions  $T$  of which he is a member in order to eliminate those that have a range that is larger than that of some winning coalition of which he is also a member. (It may not always be possible to compare a coalition  $S$  and a coalition  $T$ , because of the definition of "range"; in that case judgment must be reserved and actor  $i$  will maintain both coalitions until a third coalition  $U$  is found to have a range smaller than either  $S$  or  $T$ .)

Once actor  $i$  has selected the winning coalitions  $S$  of which he is a member and that have a range not larger than all other winning coalitions of which he is a member, he will propose forming any one of these coalitions  $S$  to those actors that are members of each. It may be that an actor  $j$ , who is a member of one such  $S$ , is also a member of a coalition  $U$  which he has found to have a smaller range than this  $S$  (and apparently  $i$  is not a member of this coalition  $U$ , otherwise he would have proposed it himself instead of this  $S$ ). Since all members must agree to form a coalition, the refusal by  $j$  means that this  $S$  is removed from consideration. This may leave actor  $i$  without other coalitions  $S$  to propose or he may have another coalition  $S$  that is winning and that has a range not larger than other coalitions of which  $i$  is a member and  $i$  will try again.

When all members of some coalition  $S$  that is winning agree that it has a range not larger than that of any other winning coalition of which they are members, this coalition  $S$  is expected to form along with other coalitions for which the same holds.

\*Gamson allows such "non-utilitarian strategy preferences" to decide, in case an actor is indifferent between outcomes whose payoffs are within the same range: *op. cit.* p. 375.

It may be noted at this point that every two winning coalitions have at least one actor in common. Since the weight of a winning coalition is more than half the weight of all actors together, all coalitions that have no members in common with this winning coalition must necessarily be losing. All coalitions that are not losing must therefore have a member in common with the winning coalition and these non-losing coalitions are the winning coalitions (blocking coalitions having been ruled out)\*. This means that when a coalition  $S$  is accepted by all its members as a winning coalition with a range not larger than any other winning coalition of which they are members, this coalition  $S$  has a range that is not larger than any winning coalition in  $w(S)$ : because all winning coalitions have at least one member in common with the winning coalition  $S$ , this coalition  $S$  has been compared with every other winning coalition by at least one of the members of  $S$ . This comparison of the ranges of coalitions is based upon the order of the actors on the policy scale, an order upon which all actors are agreed, *i.e.* an "objective order". Therefore, the set of minimal range coalitions that is finally "found" by the actors is the set of coalitions that are "objectively" of minimal range, independent of the sequence in which the coalitions have been compared or of the actors that have made the comparisons.

To recapitulate the argument in formal notation: an actor  $i$  surveys all those winning coalitions  $T$  of which he is a member,  $i \in T$ ,  $T \in w(S)$ , and selects from among these coalitions  $T$  the coalition  $S$  that has a range,  $D_S$ , not larger than that of any other winning coalition  $T$  of which  $i$  is a member.

(a) For any  $i$ , the coalition  $S$ , such that  $i \in S$ ,  $S \in w(S)$  and  $D_S \succ D_T$ , for all  $T \in w(S)$ ,  $i \in T$

These coalitions  $S$ , satisfying (a) are then proposed to the actors  $j$ ,  $k$ ,  $l$ , ... who are members of each of these coalitions  $S$ . A coalition  $S$  is then expected to form if each of the other members of  $S$  also

\* Proof: if  $S \in w(S)$  and  $T \in w(S)$ , then  $S \cap T \neq \emptyset$ .

(1)  $S \cap T = \emptyset$  if and only if  $T \subseteq -S$ .

(2)  $S \in w(S)$  if and only if  $w_S \geq m > \frac{1}{2} \sum w_i$ , for all  $i \in N$

(3)  $S \cup -S = N$

(4)  $w_S + w_{-S} = w_N = \sum w_i$ , for all  $i \in N$

From (2) and (4):(5), if  $S \in w(S)$ , then  $w_{-S} < m$ ;  $-S \notin w(S)$ .

From (1)  $w_T \leq w_{-S}$ ; if  $S \in w(S)$ , then  $T \notin w(S)$ .

Therefore, if  $S \in w(S)$  and  $S \cap T = \emptyset$ , then  $T \notin w(S)$ .

Given  $T \in w(S)$  and  $S \in w(S)$ , it must be the case that  $S \cap T \neq \emptyset$ .

finds that the range of  $S$  is not larger than that of any other winning coalition of which he is a member, *i.e.* a coalition  $T$ ,  $j \in T$ ,  $T \in w(S)$ .

(b) The coalitions  $S$ , such that (a) holds and for every  $j \in S$ ,  $D_S \succ D_T$ , for all  $T$ , such that  $j \in T$ ,  $T \in w(S)$ .

The coalitions  $S$  that satisfy (b) — and therefore also (a) — are the winning coalitions with a range that is not larger than that of any other winning coalition of which a member of  $S$  is also a member. Since all winning coalitions have at least one member in common with  $S$ ,  $S$  satisfies (b) only if it has a range not larger than that of any other winning coalition.

$S \in w(S)$  and  $D_S \succ D_T$  for any  $T \in w(S)$  (8)

This describes the set of minimal range coalitions\*.

When the theory is adapted to the requirements of empirical testing, the payoffs are defined in terms of cabinet portfolios (in the case of France and Italy) and this may be interpreted as implying a constant-sum assumption. The game now exhibits all the features of a simple game†: all winning coalitions have the same value of control over all cabinet portfolios.

Under these conditions, only minimal winning coalitions are expected to form. In the context of minimal range theory this is especially important, since there may be actors who are unnecessary for the coalition to be winning and yet their inclusion does not add to the coalition's range: their policy position is in between that of two actors who are also members of that coalition.

An example may clarify the issue. In a voting body with actors  $h$ ,  $i$ ,  $j$ ,  $k$ ,  $l$ , ... with policy positions in that order, the majority criterion,  $m$  is  $m = 51$ . The weights of the first three actors are  $w_h = 25$ ,  $w_i = 19$  and  $w_j = 27$ . The actors  $h$  and  $j$  can form a minimal winning coalition,  $h&j$ . The actor  $i$  is unnecessary in the coalition  $h&i&j$ , but  $i$  does not add to the range of that coalition, since his policy position is in between the positions of  $h$  and  $j$ . It may also be noted that extreme actors in a minimal range coalition are always necessary to win, otherwise they could be excluded and a winning coalition of smaller range would result.

A minimal range theory that would start from the definition of

\*For an example, see the Glossary of Technical Terms.

†This conclusion has also been drawn by Leiserson on other occasions; Leiserson (1968) pp. 773–774; Leiserson (1970) p. 86, n. 11.

simple games would predict all minimal winning coalitions, under the added restriction that these minimal winning coalitions should be of minimal range:  $h&j$  would be predicted but not  $h&i&j$  because the latter, though also of minimal range, is not minimal winning. Such a theory would be very similar in structure to the size principle which predicts among all minimal winning coalitions those with the smallest weight, or the bargaining proposition which singles out those minimal winning coalitions with the smallest number of members.

But a different coalition theory could start from the assumption that actors strive to join coalitions of minimal ideological diversity, rather than to maximize payoffs in terms of cabinet portfolios. Ideological diversity has been defined as the range of the coalition. This range remains the same, whether or not  $i$  joins  $h&j$  so as to form  $h&i&j$ . In a game where payoffs are measured in cabinet portfolios,  $h$  and  $j$  would have to give up some cabinet posts in order for  $i$  to gain some: the game is constant-sum. But when  $i$  joins  $h&j$ , the coalition's range remains the same, no actor has to give up "something more" under  $h&j$  than under  $h&i&j$  and yet  $i$  has gained "something", since he prefers to be a member of a minimal range coalition to being excluded from it: the situation is not constant-sum\*.

Thus, a theory that incorporates the minimal range assumption as its general theoretical assumption must drop the constant-sum condition. Such a theory may predict both coalitions of the type  $h&j$  and of the type  $h&i&j$ , since their range is the same. Finally, a theory might predict only  $h&i&j$  because it stresses the "homogeneity" of a coalition which will be defined as the property of a "closed" coalition†.

Leiserson's exposition of his theory is ambiguous on this point. His definition of the payoffs would rule out the prediction of coalition with unnecessary actors. Yet the tables for the various countries show that coalitions with unnecessary actors are predicted when those actors do not add to the range<sup>27</sup>.

The theory will be redefined in this study to predict winning coalitions of minimal range whether or not they contain unnecessary actors and whether they are closed or open. The situation is

\*The situation may not even correspond to a game: without further definitions it cannot be decided whether the characteristic function which describes such outcomes satisfies the condition of superadditivity. Cf, Chapter 3, condition (2) and Chapter 5, Section 2.

†See the discussion of Axelrod's conflict of interest and closed minimal range theory, below.

not constant-sum. Players wish to be members of winning coalitions with a minimal ideological diversity. Such coalitions may have unnecessary members and yet be in the predicted set, since without the unnecessary actor, if the coalition's range remains the same, the remaining actors are not better off in terms of the dimension of payoff: ideological diversity. This interpretation of the theory seems to be closest to the version that was used in Leiserson's discussion of the historical coalitions in Sweden, France and Italy. For the example of p. 73 the theory now predicts both  $(h&j)$  and  $(h&i&j)$ .

In summary, the theory that those winning coalitions will form that have the smallest range is called "minimal range theory" and it will be tested against the data\*. The coalition  $S$  has a minimal range if, and only if:

$$S \in w(S) \text{ and } D_S \succ D_T \text{ for all } T \in w(S) \quad (8)$$

The range of  $S$  must be "not greater" than that of any winning coalition  $T$  because, in some cases, the ranges of  $S$  and  $T$  cannot be compared and in that case both  $T$  and  $S$  are predicted, unless there exists a coalition  $U$  with a range that can be compared with either  $D_S$  or  $D_T$ , and that is smaller than one or both of them.

A closely related theory has been proposed by Axelrod in his book *Conflict of Interest*<sup>28</sup>. The theory predicts "minimal connected winning coalitions". The term "connected" means that coalitions consist of actors that are adjacent on the policy scale. In the present terminology, such coalitions are called "closed coalitions". Moreover, these connected or closed coalitions must be winning and "minimal" in the sense that they contain no more members than is necessary for a closed coalition to be winning. Thus, the coalition may contain unnecessary members, but without these members the coalition would be open, i.e. the policy positions of such unnecessary actors must lie in between those of two actors that are members of the coalition. The extreme actors in the coalition must, therefore, always be necessary. In other words, a minimal connected winning coalition is, in the present

\*So as to gain a first insight in the consequences for the test results of an ordinal definition of the policy scale, with the attendant indeterminacy in the comparison of the ranges of some coalitions, another theory is tested against the data. It is identical to minimal range theory except that instead of an ordinal policy scale, the policy scale is defined as an ordered-metric scale;  $p_i$  is a cardinal number, actors are equidistant:  $p_1 = 1, p_2 = 2, \dots, p_n = n$ . This theory is called "minimal range theory, interval version, when confusion might arise, the original theory is called "minimal range theory, ordinal version".

terminology, a closed minimal range coalition. The predicted set in the theory of Axelrod is a subset of the predicted set of Leiserson's theory, as revised, containing all those minimal range coalitions that are closed. For the example on p. 73, this theory predicts only  $h&i&j$  and not  $h&j$ .

The rationale for this coalition theory is to be found in Axelrod's theory on "conflict of interest". A measure for the conflict of interest was developed for the two-person bargaining game as the unique function satisfying certain "reasonable properties". For example, the measure must be "symmetric" (independent of the labelling of players) and "independent" (invariant as to the origin and unit of the utility scale, thus making interpersonal comparison of utilities unnecessary)<sup>29</sup>. The measure was generalized to the  $n$ -person game of a "whole society" in which actors may be distributed according to their policy position on some dimension.

"Conflict of interest in society on a given policy dimension is the average conflict of interest between a pair of people, as each one of the pair takes on all the positions in the policy dimension in proportion to the position's frequency in society."<sup>30</sup>

The measure is identical to the variance of the distribution of policy positions along some dimension\*.

"Intuitively, this means that the more spread out or dispersed is the distribution of people along the policy scale.....the higher is the average conflict of interest for the whole society."<sup>30</sup>

When it comes to operationalization of the concept of conflict of interest for a theory of political coalitions, the policy dimension is defined as an ordinal policy scale. The "spread" or "dispersion" of actors in a coalition is indicated by the range of the coalition. The smaller the coalition's range, the lower the conflict of interest among its members†. This correspondence between

\*(Conflict of interest).  $= k \cdot \sum_j (x_i - x_j)^2 / N^2$ ; the variable  $x_i$  is equivalent to  $p_i$  in the present notation except that  $x$  is defined up to a linear transformation and the ordinal quantity  $p_i$  up to any order preserving transformation. For this reason, Axelrod's conflict of interest theory does not allow the formal derivation of his coalition theory which is based upon an ordinal policy scale.

†A similar suggestion has been made in an unpublished paper by W.G.A. Hazewindus and R.J. Mokken, "A Distance Analysis of Party Preferences", University of Amsterdam, 1972. A city-block-type of metric indicates the distances between the preferences of individual representatives and the cohesion between groups of such representatives, i.e. parliamentary groups or coalitions.

the conflict of interest in a coalition and the range of that coalition is not derived formally but it is nevertheless very persuasive on intuitive grounds.

It remains unclear why a closed coalition should have a lower conflict of interest than an open coalition with the same range. A member somewhere "in the middle" of the coalition would probably add just about the average score to the total conflict of interest in the coalition; a coalition including this actor could still have a minimal conflict of interest. An "all-but-extreme" actor, however, would add a more than average score to the conflict of interest in the coalition, and therefore should be excluded, if he is unnecessary for the coalition to be winning and if members wish to minimize a coalition's conflict of interest.

A related objection<sup>31</sup> is that a coalition might have minimal conflict of interest without being a minimal connected winning coalition. An example may clarify this. There might be an actor  $i$  who could form a winning coalition with the large adjacent actor  $j$  or with the smaller (and not adjacent) actor  $k$ . Of course, everything depends on the manner in which a measure of "conflict of interest" is defined. But if such a measure would be at all analogous to that of variance, it would be easy to imagine that the coalition of  $i$  and  $k$  could end up with a lower "conflict of interest" than the coalition of  $i$  and  $j$ . If the ordinal definition of actors' policy is maintained, some rule would be necessary to decide on the comparison between  $i&j$  and  $i&k$  with respect to their "conflict of interest"\*. But, as matters stand, there is no good reason to assume that a closed ("connected") coalition would have a lower degree of "conflict of interest" than some open coalitions of the type  $i&k$  (especially since  $k$  is smaller than  $j$ ). It is hard to imagine a derivation of a measure of "conflict of interest" that would meet these objections, and maintain the definition of the predicted set as the set of minimal connected winning coalitions, that is the set of closed minimal range coalitions.

The theory to be tested against the data is the "closed minimal range theory", which states that only closed winning coalitions  $S$  of minimal range will form†.  $S$  is a closed minimal range coalition if, and only if

\*The same problem is posed in the derivation of policy distance theory, (cf. Chapter 5, Section 2b).

†For an example, see the Glossary of Technical Terms.

$S \in w(S)$  and  $D_S \succ D_T$  for any  $T \in w(S)$ , and for any  $i, j, k$ , (9)  
 such that  $i, k \in S$ , if  $p_i < p_j < p_k$  then  $j \in S$

Theoretically, a third minimal range theory is possible. Coalitions will be of minimal range and minimal winning, that is unnecessary members are excluded; open coalitions may occur. The predicted set is a subset of  $W^m$  (in the context of the simple game). The coalition  $S$  is a "minimal winning, minimal range coalition" if, and only if

$S \in w(S)$  and  $D_S \succ D_T$  for any  $T \in w(S)$  (10)  
 and  $w_S - w_i < m$  for all  $i \in S$

For the example on p. 73 this theory predicts only ( $h \& j$ ).

The tests of minimal winning theory, of minimal range theory, and of closed minimal range theory will provide sufficient insight into the working of the various assumptions to make a test of this last theory superfluous: its potential performance may be inferred from the results of the other, related, theories\*.

Theories of political coalitions have until now been built upon some minimization condition that tended to restrict the membership of the predicted coalitions. Minimal winning theory excluded all coalitions with unnecessary actors for the simple game. The minimum size principle and the bargaining proposition impose further restrictions upon this set  $W^m$ , singling out the minimal winning coalitions with smallest weight,  $w_S$ , or with smallest mem-

\*Another related theory is tested against the data; "basic alternative theory": only closed, minimal winning coalitions are expected to form. (For an example, see the Glossary of Technical Terms.) It may be seen that a closed minimal winning coalition is also of minimal range. A closed coalition contains all actors with policy positions "between" the positions of its extreme members as members. A minimal winning coalition does not contain actors that are not necessary to win. A minimal range coalition is a winning coalition that cannot be shown to have a larger range than any other winning coalition. A winning coalition  $T$  could be shown to have a smaller range than some closed minimal winning coalition  $S$  only if the policy positions of the extreme members of  $T$  would lie "in between" the policy positions of the extreme members of  $S$  (cf. Section 4, proposition (7), p. 70). But if this is the case, all members of  $T$  must also be members of  $S$  since  $S$  is a closed coalition. And, since  $S$  is also a minimal winning coalition, the exclusion of any one of its members will render it losing. Therefore, all members of  $S$ , including the extreme members of  $S$ , must also be members of  $T$ .  $T$  cannot have a smaller range than  $S$  and  $S$ , as is every closed minimal winning coalition, is of minimal range. This argument does not apply when there is a pair of actors that tie on the scale. This "basic alternative" theory has been formulated only after the results of other, related theories became known. Its test against the present data is therefore not definitive.

bership,  $m_S$ . The introduction of an elementary notion of policy distance along an ordinal policy scale, led to the prediction of coalitions of minimal range, or to a subset of those, the closed coalitions of minimal range. All these theories impose restrictions on the size of the membership of the predicted coalition. This may not always be adequate to explain coalition formation in real life. In the next chapter, some alternative hypotheses will be discussed and a new theory of political coalitions, policy distance theory, is presented.

often called the *executive* or *cabinet coalition*. Its distinctiveness is clear in that it is quite often formed after the parliamentary program coalition, and in that it sometimes changes when the parliamentary coalition remains basically the same, as when Conservative Members of Parliament (MPs) deserted Margaret Thatcher in favor of John Major in 1990. Also, even if votes of disciplined parliamentary majorities are typically unanimous for both coalitions, the cabinet coalition may often have a narrower real base of support. That is, it may not *really* be supported by disgruntled individual members of a majority coalition who think they deserved a place in the cabinet but did not get it.

There is no concluding chapter, since the whole of the book is making the case for considering these four coalitions as a nested set, wherein one must ask how each coalition level interacts with the others.

This basic theory sketch is meant to travel well across the range of compared political systems, even if specific political systems offer a range of variations at different times and places.

The main objective is to have a theory of political coalitions that helps us to understand not only the events of history but what is happening in our daily newspapers. Often social science theory is at its best in *back-casting*, showing why past events were within the range of expectation. If further development permits better *forecasting* of events, coalition theory will take its place as part of the central core of a comparative political science. That would be supplemented by a baseline theory of standard political strategies and tactics in the way of manipulating institutional structures, arranging recruitment of leaders, and directly or indirectly influencing such leaders. Such theory would also recognize that the political game may change—with distinctive cooperative and competitive choices and consequences—under three distinctive *rules climates*, Machiavellian (opportunistic), Grotian (informal normed), or Kantian (formal normed), as I have argued elsewhere, in *The Rise and Fall of Regimes* (Cook 2000).

I welcome suggestions for improved analysis of the four kinds of coalitions addressed. I can be readily reached by mail: Terrence Cook, Department of Political Science, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington, 99164-4880, or else via e-mail at [tcook@wsu.edu](mailto:tcook@wsu.edu).

## 1

## Coalition Theory and Nested Coalitions

Politics, any politics, is an action conducted in common by some men against other men.

—Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Ghost of Stalin*

While his friend Simone de Beauvoir would have reminded him that women, too, engage in coalition politics, Sartre correctly reminds us that often in politics we cooperate only to better compete. Indeed, we do so through a variety of kinds of coalitions. These in some respects may be similar to each other, even beyond the minimal definition of “coalition” suggested in the Preface. If we are to study coalitions across changing contexts of space and time, we should self-consciously reflect on how coalitions are similar and different. We may also want to reflect on the adequacy of some one choice model amid uncertainty to cover what we observe of actual coalition behavior. There is a spectrum of models that roughly moves from high caution to low: maximin, utility-maximizing, satisficing, minimax-regret, and maximax. For most choices, I have said in the Preface, I would bet on Herbert Simon’s satisficing, since it assumes that, as a result of the press of time, only a narrowed range of alternatives is examined, serially, and held against an aspiration threshold, such that the first “good enough” one that looms into view is chosen.

Against a common dogma, chiefly espoused by the adherents of the rational choice school, I do not accept the view that all theory must build from the *micro* (small) to the *meso* (middling) to the *macro* (large) levels.

They are mistaken if they think that other sciences, such as physics, developed that way. In any case, they are fooling themselves if they think that they already possess the invariably correct microlevel psychological assumptions in utility-maximizing rationality. Fortunately, just as physicists managed to do much good science long before emergence of string theory (which yet has many loose ends), political scientists do not need to have a settled "micropolitical" model of how individual agents think and choose before describing and in large part explaining important political patterns at the "mesopolitical" and even "macropolitical" levels of analysis. I have elsewhere offered a very macropolitical theory sketch of how political communities and their regimes come into being and fall apart (Cook 2000). In the present book, more focused on the mesopolitical theory level, I expand upon the kinds of coalition mechanisms involved.

One should need no apology to take theory large. But many have recently urged the importance of "recontextualizing" our studies. For some this connotes avoidance of sweeping generalizations about large patterns of human behavior. One must, they say, return home from "abstractions" to more "concrete" actions within closely defined situations that are highly contingent. They quite often charge "megalomania" of those who may attempt larger generalization. They deny that this is useful or even possible, since all politics is ultimately rooted in local situations needing what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz called "thick descriptions" for a proper accounting. Among other things, he argued that only such analysis of the context may help us grasp the meaning of the action for the actors (Geertz, 1973; 1983). But while more broadly charging barrenness of the interpretive schools in social science (a judgment with which I largely concur), Mario Bunge points out that those who make such an argument are often vague on what they themselves "mean" by *meaning*. Further, we cannot really "know" most of the individuals who do the behaving. Even if we did know some of them, it might not help in predicting macrosocial facts. One paradox of prediction is that the behavior of a few individuals is harder to predict than the behavior of aggregates, as any physicist (Bunge's original expertise) can tell you of the three-body problem. It is far easier to identify any patterns in large batches of behavior (Bunge 1996, 13–16).

Turning things about, perhaps the true megalomania holds those geographic area specialists who dogmatically claim that the local politics of their special study is wholly unique. This may be exposed as an illusion by study of other cases. The country-case specialists also assert that those who have not immersed themselves in its detail for a lifetime cannot say anything about it. That is a too convenient way to dismiss rival accounts of what is going on in the specific context.

While otherwise conceding many virtues in local specialized studies, some of us also see some vices in doing only that. Blinders may keep a horse on the normal track but prevent it from finding a better way. There can be

some gains in recontextualizing by going large, not small. Sometimes only a general analysis can offer sound insight into particular cases. Also, smaller patterns can even be contingent upon larger ones, as Tsebelis regards much strategic/tactical choice (e.g., Tsebelis 1990) to be. My purposes here require this latter strategy of generalizing quite broadly.

Within this chapter I first review the more general propositions about coalitions, propositions primarily drawn from parliamentary program coalition behavior. In this we have for at least several hundred cases the best metrics for such factors as the numbers of players (political parties), their relative strengths (votes in the electorate, seats in parliament), their ideological similarity or difference, the coalitions that actually form, and their durations, usually delimited by a change in the chief executive or in the party coalition sustaining that executive.

In the second part I elaborate a view of four kinds of coalitions as normally nested. Recognizing such nesting is important in understanding or predicting some coalition behavior, that involving interactions. Although a few statements about coalition behavior or its results may apply to all of the coalition types to be examined, less generalized statements may apply only to the specific kind of coalition being examined. But let us turn to a brief summary of propositions about parliamentary coalition behavior.

## I: THEORY OF POLITICAL COALITIONS

Although most of the propositions in coalition theory focus on parliamentary program coalitions, it may be helpful to review some of the better known principles as a critical standard to set against other kinds of coalitions. It helps in thinking through the propositions to imagine oneself as being a political party leader: First, one could be the *formateur* ("one who forms"), the leader of usually one of the stronger parties invited by the chief of state to attempt formation of a government. Or, if conditions are too uncertain to imagine a likely prime minister, one could as in Belgium be called the *informateur* ("one who becomes informed"). Second, one could also imagine being the leader of a usually weaker party approached by a *formateur* as a possible coalition partner, if any partner is needed to constitute a majority.

The problem in predicting which coalitions will form arises because the abstractly possible coalition outcomes steeply rise with the number of factions or parties, the number of players ( $n$ ). As William Riker noted, the figure is  $2^n$  if one includes the possibilities of no coalitions forming at all as well as a grand coalition of all factions or parties (Riker 1962, 35–36). Thus just 6 parties could have 64 coalition possibilities! In the real world, of course, most of the possible coalitions would somehow be unlikely, and this is so by principles we are about to explore. I briefly review some propositions that attempt to predict which coalitions will form. From the

perspective of a party leader, one would usually want to be in a coalition that is (1) winning, (2) minimally so, (3) able to cover median policy space, (4) ideologically connected and closed, and (5) expected to pay off partners by the proportionality rule. Let us look at each proposition in turn.

(1) To be in a winning coalition: If not anticipating any liability for the next election in being presently attached to an unpopular government, one normally prefers to be in a winning or majority coalition rather than in either a minority coalition or no coalition at all. By definition, a winning coalition can normally carry initiatives of one's coalition partners, and a merely blocking coalition can merely veto initiatives of rivals. In its largest sense, a losing coalition can do neither.

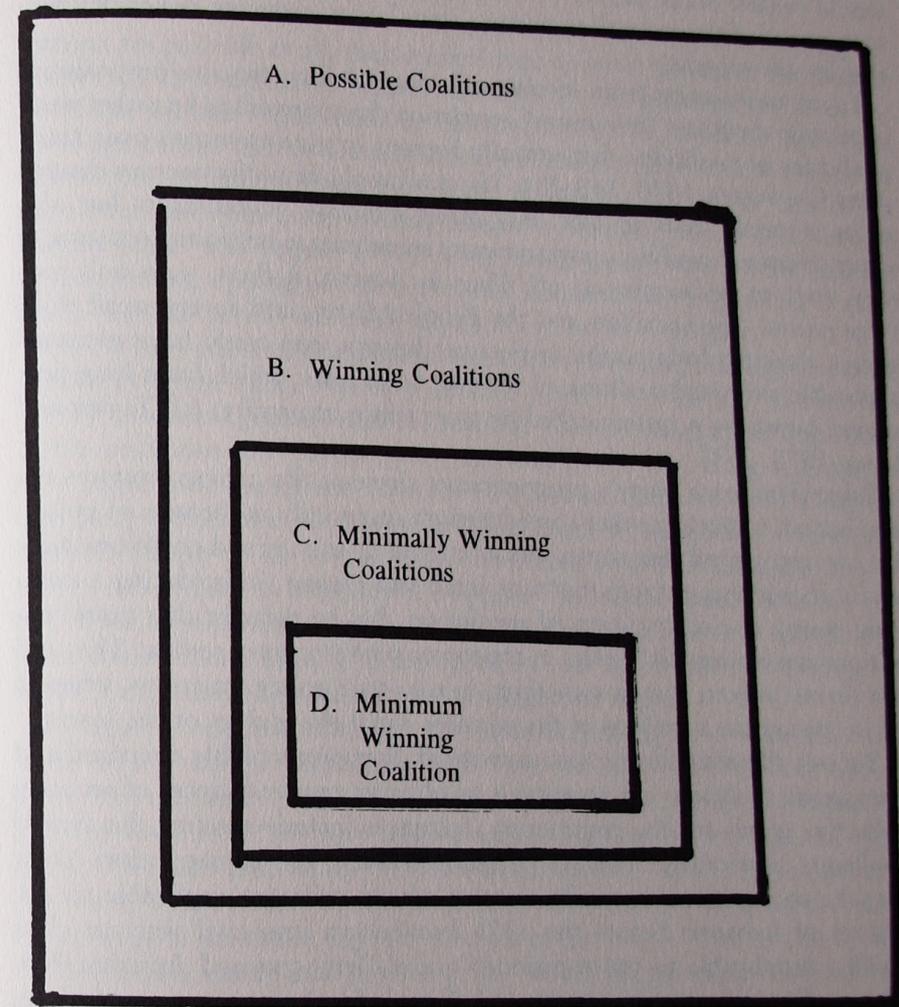
Coalitions by definition amount to poolings of resources better to attain aims, if not the same ones, then at least compatible ones, such as offices and policy goals. In a parliamentary coalition, the central resource ultimately consists in votes in parliament. Being in a minority coalition could occasionally secure some influence over policy, and sometimes even permit occupancy of some subcabinet or cabinet posts. But minority coalitions tend to have fewer policy victories and to be short-lived.

There are many possible "winning coalitions" for a large number of parties (or  $2^{n-1}/2$ ) normally including some that could include the same party as one of their members. In Figure 1.1, that space of the square A that excludes B includes formation of no coalition at all, as well as coalitions that are undersized (cannot muster a simple majority in parliament).

(2) To favor a minimal and minimum winning coalition: Although coalitions aim to win, to secure control of government and thus dominate the making of policy, the more rewarding and stable ones allegedly prefer to have their coalition minimally winning. A minimally winning coalition is defined as one that musters a majority in parliament, but would become a losing coalition if any party were to leave it. That is to say, it has no redundant partner. As indicated in Figure 1.1, one is here shifting to a subset of a subset. That space of square B left out of square C consists in oversized coalitions. Present in William Gamson, who held that agents would prefer a lean, less costly winning coalition to maximize their expected benefit, this thesis was best developed by William Riker, who emphasized that having too many or unnecessary partners would reduce per capita benefits for the coalition members.

To Riker, the avoidance of redundant partners requires not only a minimal coalition but a minimum one. The minimal and minimum would be the same if all parties that could enter a coalition offered the same number of seats, but they usually do not have equal weights. He defines *minimum winning* as not having any more votes than is necessary to clear the simple majority. Put otherwise, if a coalition could make a simple majority either by adding Party D (which has 25 seats) or Party E (which has 30 seats), the *formateur*, other considerations equal, would prefer Party D. But Riker

Figure 1.1  
Possible Coalitions and Limiting Size



conceded that his stated ideal conditions are not always present to yield the expected result: "In  $n$ -person, zero-sum games, where side-payments are permitted, where players are rational, and they have perfect information, only minimum winning coalitions occur" (Riker 1962, 32). Riker relaxed his language to apply his predictions more easily to the actual world: "In social situations similar to  $n$ -person, zero-sum games with side-payments, participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will ensure winning and no larger" (Riker 1962, 47).

Other factors equal, by principles (1) and (2) the maker of a coalition would not want to have it either undersize (a minority coalition, which

would often fail to muster any ad hoc majority votes) or oversized (for this would require some payoff to the redundant partner, and even more of such payoff if the redundant partner were larger, reducing per capita benefits for the others).

Taken in isolation from ideological compatibility, the size propositions (especially the Riker "minimum" restriction) have proved to be rather weak predictors of coalitions that actually formed in nine countries over many years (De Swaan 1970, 149–51). The real world of parliamentary democracies certainly casts up not only many minority governments but also many oversized coalition governments, sometimes a necessary outcome if they want to be winning at all. Thus in Austria, if there were only two large parties (the Socialists and the People's Party, and a very small third party), during a long period of postwar history, one could have expected a possible oversized coalition of the two large ones, which for a long time shared power by a system called *proporz* (proportionality) (cf. Taylor and Laver 1973, 233).

Riker fixed on a party's proportionate share of the cabinet posts as the maximand, forgetting other considerations, especially in the way of policy. He had recognized that sometimes oversized or even grand coalitions were useful in winning through military bluff and bluster, intimidating a common enemy in circumstances of revolution. But he thought that grand coalitions were normally useless in the tamer parliamentary setting. They did not permit anyone to win something in zero-sum policy situations, wherein by definition the winnings of the winners equal the losings of the losers.

But not all policy fits the zero-sum mold. Sometimes highly oversized and even grand coalitions are acceptable as offering greater chances of securing collective goods for the community. Instances include meeting the shared challenge of winning a war or of reconstructing the damage after. Or it may be to minimize mutually ruinous ethnic strife (as applicable to the history of Lebanon before the 1975 breakdown into civil war) or class conflict (applicable to the mentioned Social-Democrat and Austrian People's coalitions in postwar Austria). At least in local governance, sometimes at the larger political community level as well, some peoples prefer to arrive at decisions by broadly shared consensus, not a combat to see who can win by a narrow majority.

Riker admitted that imperfect information could also derail the minimal and minimum expectations: Among other plausible reasons to accept just a slightly oversized coalition of just one small party, it can offer to the formateur as well as prospective partners a margin of safety if uncertain of winning. It also offers a hedge against losing one's majority as a result of either weak discipline of members of a party (they do not vote according to instructions of leaders) or wholesale exit of one of the parties (it defects to neutrality or to a rival coalition). Also, taking in a certain small party, even if redundant, may prevent its adherence to a rival coalition, especially

in the next parliamentary election. Politics are not only building one's own coalition but breaking the adversary's.

(3) To cover median positions in issue space: When stable winning coalitions are possible at all, their leaders tend to have "covered" the median position(s) in contextually salient issue space(s). A coalition that does not cover the median voter could be defeated by a rival coalition that does. Although others such as Duncan Black or Anthony Downs had earlier explored this normal political advantage of holding the center, the fullest exposition has been quite recently offered by Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle (Laver and Shepsle 1996). A very small party in the pivotal position at the median, tipping partners at either side into winning status, is especially likely to benefit in coalition payoffs of posts or policy.

(4) To have connectedness and closure: Party leaders prefer partners with similar program aims, even if a smaller partner is available to meet the merely numerical principles of (1) and (2). Put otherwise, most of the more stable coalitions are "connected" (Axelrod's term for being adjacent in Left–Right issue space) and "closed" (De Swaan's term for not leaving out any party within the range covered). Although it is arguable that it does not easily apply to all politics (e.g., some state parties of India are hard to place), issue space is normally Left–Right ideological space, with the Left end favoring more socioeconomic equality, the Right not. Any specific program coalition can usually be described by one of five distinctive ranges or blocs: Left, center–Left, center, center–Right, or Right.

As against an "unconnected" or "open coalition," few observed coalitions unite "strange bedfellows" who are far apart or skip over one or more intermediaries. The relatively rare instances of coalitions of ideological opposites are often more against something than for any common program. They also tend to be short-lived (Axelrod 1970). De Swaan states it this way: "Actors strive to join coalitions of minimal ideological diversity, rather than to maximize payoffs in terms of cabinet portfolios" (De Swaan 1973, 74). De Swaan and Browne prefer to call the principle *minimization of policy space*. They set it against the Riker merely minimal size principle, a purely quantitative standard that anticipated distribution of cabinet portfolios as the only concern. Like Axelrod, De Swaan and Browne emphasize that a party leader would not want the strain of an overly broad field of issue space. To minimize that, the leader would prefer not to skip over some party within the span necessary to form a minimal winning coalition. Also, it would minimize conflict of interest if the leader were able to build the coalition with his or her own party at the center, or "pivotal position," of the coalition. Sometimes these preferences would mean going oversize with a larger partner, if closer in ideological space. That could cause fewer practical problems than adding a smaller partner more distant in ideological space. This last could alienate copartisans or pose insuperable obstacles to negotiation of a coalition program. Yet that is not necessarily impossible,

as attested by a 1973–77 strange bedfellow coalition of leftish and secular Labour and relatively conservative and historically clerical Fine Gael in Ireland, forced by the inability of either alone to defeat the more centrist Fianna Fáil (Cohan 1982, 267). The coupling of the minimal size idea with connectedness or closure proved to be more predictive of which coalitions form than Riker's merely numerical size principle taken of itself (De Swaan 1970, 1973; Taylor and Laver 1973; Browne 1973, esp. 65–75).

(5) To expect proportional payoffs: The implicit principle of partners' anticipated relative payoffs was stated by William Gamson under the rubric of the parity principle: "Any participant will expect others to demand from a coalition a share of the payoff proportional to the amount of resources which they contribute to a coalition" (Gamson 1961, 376). As measured by ministerial portfolios, this has empirically proved to be a very strong relationship: "The number of ministries received by partners in a governing coalition is indeed explained, almost on a one-to-one basis, by their contribution of parliament seats to that coalition" (Browne 1973, 56; also, Browne and Frendreis 1980). Gamson also theorized that the value of a coalition to a participant would be the value of the participants' expected share in the payoff as discounted by (multiplied by) the perceived probability that the coalition would win. But he also believed that the proportionality payoff rule would also apply to less measurable policy, not just the cabinet posts addressed by Browne.

With perfect information and confidence that the proportionality rule will be followed, if all coalition members maximized the expression  $r/R$  when  $r$  is any one member's resources and  $R$  the summed resources of coalition members, the coalition would also have to be a minimally winning one, as in principle (2) (Hill 1973, 29–30).

Hill notes that although most members are insistent on their fair share of payoffs of cabinet positions, any one member of a coalition could often be willing to forgo proportional rewards in policy if necessary to preserve the coalition (Hill 1973, 7). More broadly, if a winning coalition of parties is often observed to take literally all available cabinet positions, it may forgo taking all possible rewards in the way of policies, for a too greedy denial of at least occasional policy benefits to losing parties could threaten the future viability of the decision-making institution.

The payoff principle, and possibly others, may not be symmetrical for the *formateur* and the party asked to join a coalition: The *formateur* may sometimes be happy to have a party join without getting a proportionate reward, but that would be regarded as unfair, and the shortchanged party leader would be too resentful to enter the coalition at all or to stay there very long.

Perhaps because they are implicitly rules of thumb of boundedly rational party leaders, the preceding five principles become somewhat predictive of

both (1) which coalitions get formed and (2) which ones, once formed, endure.

The principles tend with modest success to predict which coalitions form from among those that are otherwise technically possible, a set that we have noted steeply rises with the number of parties. Sometimes the principles combine to make a unique prediction of the result. After the October 1999 election in Austria, which has 183 seats in its parliament, the results were as follows: Greens, 13.7 percent of the vote, 14 seats; Social Democrats, 32.5 percent of the vote, 65 seats; Austrian People's Party, 26.9 percent of the vote, 52 seats; and Freedom Party, 26.9 percent of the vote, 52 seats. The coalition that eventually formed included only the Austrian People's Party and the Freedom Party. Was it well predicted by the five principles of coalition theory? Yes. The coalition that formed was a winning one, which had 104 of the 183 seats in parliament, or 56.8 percent of the vote. Among possible winning coalitions, was this also both minimal and minimum? Yes, there was no way to form a coalition closer to a bare 50 percent plus 1. Nor was there any chance of excluding any party, since *either* the Austrian People's Party *or* the Freedom Party could without coalition have formed at best a probably short-lived minority government. Did the coalition reflect connectedness and closure? Again the answer is yes, although another winning coalition with such connectedness and closure could have been a coalition of the Social Democrats and Austrian People's Parties (but that coalition would not have been minimal or minimum). Did the coalition cover median issue spaces in Austria? Almost certainly. Did the coalition follow the rule of proportionality, at least in allocating cabinet posts? Once again yes, since the six cabinet slots given to the Freedom Party were at least nearly half of all posts, even if they did not get the chancellorship.

Single-point predictions can sometimes be made in coalition theory, especially in coalitions in tripolar party or faction situations under an opportunistic rules climate, provided that the three players are not all roughly equal, when information about their relative powers alone would not yield a specific prediction. In all other cases, one would need only to know the relative powers of players A, B, and C (as less than, equal to, greater than) to predict the most likely coalition outcome among all possible arrays of their relative powers and the alternatives of no coalition, coalition of A and B against C, coalition of A and C against B, coalition of B and C against A, and grand coalition of all three, assuming that the players are rational and interested in their own well-being. Readers may put this into a matrix and see the logic for themselves (also, see Caplow 1968). Assuming a dangerous political context, I have left out the three cases when a pair could coalesce for some purpose clearly not involving any threat to the third player.

But aside from some postdictive studies of war, it is rare for social science to make single-point predictions, looking rather for probabilistic predictions for classes of events. Often when unable to offer a one-point prediction, a theory could merely rule out an array of outcomes as implausible and suggest two or more plausible outcomes. Any validated reduction of the range of what could be expected is clear scientific gain. Perhaps some demand far too much of a coalition theory. More like meteorology than physics, political science can reasonably expect to miss many cases.

Sometimes *anomalous* cases can awaken us to yet unrecognized predictors of what we are studying. Thus if tripolar contests are not as nasty as expected, it may be because they have entered a nicer rules climate: Under opportunistic rules two typically gang up against one (Caplow 1968). But when restrained by law, they could often mutually backscratch in a kind of grand coalition, as when in the United States the army, the navy and the air force support each other's budget demands. Improved predictability of coalition formation perhaps requires exploration of other variables, such as past experience of agents with each other, leaving learned legacies of trust or distrust.

Failures may in part arise because the principles are often considered in isolation from each other when combination gives better results, as illustrated by the linkage of limiting size with ideological connectedness and closure. Conceding the exception of oversize and even grand coalition in crises, Abram De Swaan otherwise found rather strong empirical confirmation in his nine-country study for this statement "Parliamentary majority coalitions tend to be closed along the policy scale and, in times of normalcy, of minimal range" (De Swaan 1970, 159).

But missed cases may also be sought through recognition that often one of the principles, when applied to real world situations, limits the applicability of another. Thus if a coalition leader knows that a majority is a hopeless prospect, that he or she is merely leading a minority government coalition (sometimes quite literally a "caretaker" until a new election), it does not matter whether a coalition partner is more distant in ideological space, since one is unlikely to attempt passage of any major program, or one may pick up ad hoc support from anywhere on the Left-Right range for distinctive proposals. As already noted, a leader may prefer to go oversize with a coalition in order to take in the ideologically more similar partner rather than go with a smaller but numerically adequate partner that is more dissimilar, since that could make it impossible to agree on a program at all or could alienate his or her own party members. Such refinements of theory, recognizing when one principle bounds applicability of another, makes for a more complex theory, but it may better fit the real world.

After all, the preceding principles of coalition behavior bristle with paradoxes: Thus, although a coalition always demands some pooling of your resources with hope of winning by principle (1), you would not want to

contribute beyond the expected value of your share of the payoff, as in principle (5). Also, your share of the payoff by principle (5) depends on winning, and in the formation process, uncertainty of doing so could spur violation of principle (2) by leaning to oversize. Principle (2) implies a de facto unanimity rule for coalition decisions, but if Riker's theory predicts highest stability for barely winning coalitions, that is the condition by definition in which any one coalition partner could destroy the coalition by defection. Your share of cabinet portfolios by principle (5) depends upon how many seats your party can win, and you are most likely to be in sharpest competition for voter support with the parties adjacent (just to your Left or just to your Right) in issue space. Thus a social democratic party, wanting votes of workers, is in some cases likely to compete with both a communist party to its Left and a more centrist liberal reform party to its Right. But those issue-space adjacent parties by principle (4) are also those with whom you are most likely to enter into a political coalition, sometimes even a preelectoral one. Yet sometimes an "extremist" party of the far Left, such as the Communists (or the far Right, perhaps neofascist) is unacceptable as a partner, forcing one to violate principle (2) in having to go undersize or oversize or violate (4) in having to extend the ideological range unduly to make a winning team. By principle (4) one prefers to be in a coalition of "birds of a feather," but sometimes that can make it impossible to have that coalition satisfy principle (3), of covering medians, or it may lead into an oversize coalition if the party at the margin is a big one, violating principle (2). Thus Finland has experienced oversized Left coalitions, which nevertheless proved to be quite durable (Nyholm 1982, esp. 105-8). In any event, covering median positions in issue space can put a parliamentary leader in different loci, depending upon whether the referent is the electorate, the parliament tout court, the parliamentary majority coalition, or the cabinet coalition. This last point is elaborated later.

In short, coalition theory posits a set of apparently reasonable predictive principles. But something as in Kenneth Arrow's Impossibility Theorem for ideal principles of democracy, satisfying some of these principles can often frustrate satisfying the others (Arrow 1951). As the Chinese proverb holds, he who chases two rabbits catches neither. Indeed, chasing more than two rabbits at once almost assures failure to catch any. Chasing five rabbits may make it seem that one has fallen down Alice's famous rabbit hole! But perhaps the metaphor wrongly posits the goal of "maximizing" the catching of one rabbit, when the real goal may be better described as the more feasible aim of keeping all five rabbits out of one's kitchen garden. That is best achieved by a menacing lunge toward whatever rabbit currently most threatens one's lettuce.

Although one doubts that all actors, for example, the *formateur* and the party receiving a bid (as I have illustrated for the proportionality principle), would have the same preferences, it is at least conceivable that Charles

Taylor and Michael Laver could be correct in suspecting that the criteria could be lexicographic, that is, clearly preference ordered, such that the higher criterion would eclipse any lower one, but cases of rough ties in evaluating possible coalitions could go to a lower-ranked criterion for resolution (Taylor and Laver 1973, 208). But I suspect a more complex pattern of how one principle may predict bounds on another.

Further, I think most actors would vary weightings of the five coalition principles, not to “maximize” any one of them but rather the value of relevant outcomes considered as a whole. This would be like trying to get best value for a basket of goods, much as a multinational corporation thinks of global overall value rather than always maximizing *profit* in every one nation-state (Papandreou 1973a; 1973b).

Literally, to maximize any narrow goal is, I think, the very definition of madness. When any one of the five coalition principles begins to become self-defeating of its main purpose, or when it does unacceptable damage to another kind of purpose addressed by another principle, it is time to back off from it. Behavior is surely irrational if either (1) completely random or (2) totally rigid. Neither course of behavior would make one an effective problem solver, and as the philosopher of science Karl Popper told us in even the title of his last book, “All life is problem solving.” Boundedly rational political actors do not act at random, but rather follow “rules of thumb” principles; neither do they act in rigidity. They know when to rein in those rules.

There is a kind of higher or metarule of thumb that holds that any lesser rule of thumb should not be pursued to the point where it is either self-defeating or unacceptably damaging to some other important goal. Intel- ligible trade-off considerations could account for many failed predictions of the five most prominent principles of coalition theory. Prediction can be improved by the sort of analysis offered in Figure 1.2, where I look at the coalition principles from the distinctive vantage points of a *formateur*, the leader of the coalition, and a lesser leader of but one of the coalition partners. To ally, one needs a yes on each side.

If the five coalition principles are modestly successful in the prediction of formation of coalitions, it would seem that they could do better at forecasting of duration, especially when taken as complements to each other and when working with averages rather than discrete cases. Yet in practice few studies of coalition attributes cover as much as a third of the variance, almost surely because a variety of “random” events may shorten the life of a government (e.g., the leader dies or retires as a result of illness, a scandal occurs, a policy conspicuously fails, OPEC drives fuel prices through the roof, a recession sets in). Such bad news events become more probable with passage of time, which statistically predicts that continued government duration decreases with time. But time is not of itself the cause of a fall of a government, just the temporal window within which real

Figure 1.2  
Conflicting Vantage Points on Coalition Principles

The Coalition Principle	The Vantage	
	The formateur, leader of the senior partner faction or party	The leader of a potential junior partner faction or party
(1) Aim at winning;	does normally want to win, but can acquiesce in a minority government to enjoy the status or even some ad hoc policy wins	would also like to be in a winning coalition, but may forego an opportunity if the one being formed would strain its principles or taint the party in the next election
(2) and to be minimal and minimum, not oversize;	if not a minority government, can go oversize when needed to accommodate an ideological similar or to neutralize a likely opponent	often would prefer a slight oversize if your own faction or party is the redundant beneficiary in being taken aboard
(3) and yet minimize ideological range;	will minimize range unless a strange bedfellow is absolutely necessary to win	perhaps is willing to be the strange bedfellow, if the only way of getting into an attractive, winning coalition
(4) and cover issue medians;	normally attempts this, but medians differ in cabinet coalition, in program coalition, in parliament tout court, and in the electorate	while the formateur's party usually covers cabinet and program coalition medians, a junior faction or party may oppose that to the extent that it is more “eccentric,” at a left or right extreme
(5) and proportionally reward partners with cabinet portfolios and policy concessions.	taking proportionality as governing maximal allocation, would prefer to give less to minor partners, especially if of low status in the eyes of the electorate, but can fear that a necessary partner, even if small, could defect to a rival coalition	tends to take proportionality as the minimal allocation, as if a law of fairness written in stone, or even ask for and get an extra portfolio, since less likely to be given the most important offices, and as just noted, may be less pleased with policy concessions, even if a necessary “swing” partner may often get high concessions

causes do their work (Warwick and Easton 1992; also King, Alt, Burns and Laver 1990).

Taken of themselves, the minimal and minimum size propositions are but weakly predictive of the coalitions that actually form. Riker expected that to the extent that agents had poor information. But among other possible problems, Riker explicitly assumed a zero-sum contest, in which by definition any winnings of winners equal the losings of the losers. That seems too strong for many domestic political contests, even if allocations of offices and taxation approximate that. Arguably, zero-sum contests better describe societies undergoing social revolution, but the even greater uncertainty of such a context may instead cause formation of more oversized coalitions. Riker's minimal and minimum size principles do better in predicting coalition duration: Most research does show that both undersized (minority) coalition governments and clearly oversized ones lack the robustness of the minimally winnings ones (Dodd 1976).

Other considerations equal (but our reference to "random" events concedes that they never are), the more of the stated coalition principles are satisfied, the longer a coalition is likely to last. At the ideal limit, imagine a coalition that is at once winning, minimal and minimum in it, able to cover median positions, ideologically connected, and proportional in its payoffs of cabinet posts and policy. Such a coalition (e.g., that of Austria after the October 1999 election) may not be that common, but when it is present, it should be expected on average to endure longer than coalitions lacking any or even all of such attributes. Finally, some predictive weakness in coalition theory may arise from failure to think of coalitions as usually nested, with the games on distinctive levels interactive in complex ways. Suggesting that is a main objective of this book, even if but a preliminary exploration.

## II: THE CONCEPT OF NESTED COALITIONS

As noted in the Preface, one can conceive a kind of "nesting" of coalitions in the sense that smaller ones are built from within larger ones. To think of nesting not only as distinctive sets of people but also as fields on which political games are played offers an enlarged perspective on coalitions. At any level one may find equilibria, which are either stable or unstable. In the familiar example, a nested set of bowls offers us a stable equilibrium in that all but very large disturbances will find the bowls neatly resettled into each other. At their margins, they smoothly fit. But other kinds of nestings can be less stable, as when all yet living, a June bug is in the mouth of a frog that is in the mouth of a grass snake. Unstable equilibria, or where a small disturbance can readily make a large and lasting difference in pattern, may sometimes apply when one set of laws is contained within another, or when one political entity is contained within an-

other. There are circumstances in which nested elements enter into major conflict and new instability.

To some degree all equilibria are artifactual. We can *make* them stable by broadening the range of permissible fluctuation of the "same" system and by contracting the window of time. Alternatively, we can *make* them unstable by narrowing the window of permissible fluctuation or by enlarging the window of time. In the different sorts of coalitions examined later, one may see both periods of relatively stable equilibria and of unstable equilibria. As in economics, in political science one should avoid thinking that changing things are either always falling (or refalling) into equilibria or that they are always falling out of equilibria. Sometimes how and when one looks dominate what one will see.

As at least episodic equilibria, the coalitions that I examine are similar in some ways: For one thing, they are alike in the denotative sense that leaving aside any collaboration against nature, any political coalition is an agreement of some to cooperate in order to compete better against some others. The cooperators pool or coordinate some of their resources so that they do not act in isolation, ineffectually, or even at cross-purposes but rather in coordination toward attainment of goals. Drawing from Émile Durkheim's *The Division of Labor*, one analyst noted that two agents can tend toward solidarity when they are (1) *similar*, in having such complementary goals, which can either be the same, sharable goal or different goals that are compatible; (2) *different*, in the sense that the differences permit each to supply what is lacking to the other. Thus one coalition partner may hold the advantage of larger numbers of voters, while another has the advantage of median issue location. In contrast, two agents tend to cleavage if (1) they have incompatible goals, such that they either want the same thing that cannot be shared at the same time or want distinctive goals that yet exclude each other; and (2) their differences are not complements, but only points on which to hang prejudices due to (1) (Brown 1965, 73–76). Such analysis can be applied to a pair of individuals or any paired aggregates of people, such as ethnic groups, political parties, or even states in the international system.

Students of game theory, mostly in mathematics and in economics, have explored how those engaged in conflict may in *one-shot plays* sometimes arrive at equilibrium conditions that permit cooperation. They have also developed an *evolutionary game theory* subtype. Keeping within the formal definition of a specific game type, usually Prisoner's Dilemma, this subtype looks at results from many rounds of play, over which one may apply a chosen set of parameters, or even allow some changes in strategy, and so on.

Some game theorists may recognize even *spontaneous change* in games at some point, comparable to new speciation in evolutionary biology. I have elsewhere elaborated upon spontaneously transforming games in a

grand theory of change in regimes (Cook 2000). But to extend the biological metaphor, perhaps we need to invent a *transgenic* or *transformational game theory*, thinking of how political agents can engineer exits from more self-destructive games (e.g., negative-sum or zero-sum) and get into more cooperative ones. Negotiators as well as students of negotiation, like Monsieur Jourdain in speaking prose, have already been into transformational games. They recognize, for example, that they must abandon the notion of unchanging individual preference orderings so common among game theorists (cf. Jervis 1986; Oye 1986). At least with respect to its members, a new coalition often involves transformations of more conflictual kinds of games into more cooperative ones.

In a very bad case, actors may have been in a *negative-sum game*, wherein by definition the losings of the losers exceed any winnings of the winners. Thus one of two small parties in sharp competition for a few seats may by its negative attacks totally destroy the other party.

Or, more plausibly, they may have been in some *zero-sum game*, in which by definition any winnings of the winners exactly equal the losings of the losers, as when two parties try to harvest votes from the same target constituency.

Less conflictual is the mixed-motive *Prisoner's Dilemma* game, wherein both could be better off by cooperation (not ratting on the partner in crime). But in the absence of any communication between the prisoners, for each the immediate advantage is to negotiate a reduction in the charge by testifying against the other. Even if they are past competitors for votes because adjacent in ideological space, an expectation of repeated interaction could help two parties coalesce, learn to trust each other against defection.

In the *impure coordination problem game*, by definition, both sides want an agreement but disagree about such points as who bears what burdens and who gets what benefits. It is already apparent that coalescing parties typically solve this problem through the *proportionality principle*.

The *collaboration problem game* by definition seeks some collective good, but just because if anyone gets it all do (it is not divisible or excludable), the problem is getting any contribution at all (this is called *free-riding*, or letting George or Georgina do it!). With too many free riders, the collective good may not be gotten by anyone. In parliamentary systems, party discipline (party leaders instruct their parliamentarians in voting) aims in part at solution of that problem.

A more easily solved collective action problem involves a *common pool resource* (a run of fish, mountain meadow grass, or perhaps new voters in a democracy) supplied by nature. Because it is divisible and potentially excludable, and because those concerned may regard each other as having absolutely equal claims to access if not harvest, it can often be given a lasting solution in principles of equal sharing (Ostrom 1990).

The *pure coordination problem game* is easiest to solve since all value agreement more than its terms. They can work matters out just by clearly communicating, as when parties arrange their conference time and place.

In a rough way, one may rise through that list of games in developing a working coalition, just as one may descend through it in reverse order when such a coalition falls apart. Indeed, in contrast to the benign form of transformational game theory, a malign version would involve promotion of the more divisive kinds of games among coalitions of one's adversaries.

Internal games aside, the last remarks remind us that coalitions are also similar in that, barring natural catastrophes that sweep away all actors, they are usually ultimately destroyed by rival coalitions. The rival coalition is not always of the same type, as when an invading alliance of enemies sweeps away one, several, or all of our four types of domestic political coalition.

The similarity of coalitions makes it possible to address common mechanisms, but one must no less speak of coalitions as in some ways distinctive, both across types and for any one type in different specific arrangements within a specific context. This only seems contradictory, for as noted by two biologists in another context, "Things are similar: this makes science possible. Things are different: this makes science necessary" (Levins and Lewontin 1985, 141).

How do coalitions differ? I do not speak at length of all coalitions, primarily addressing the political community, regime, program, and leadership types and their subtypes. In this book I say little, for example, of coalitions that cross borders in interstate relations. Yet I will make a few passing remarks on them right now.

### International Coalitions

Some coalitions transcend a single state, as in the looser alliances or even tighter coalitions that form in international relations. Usually these assume compatibility of aims and complementarity of capabilities. In one form, one state may coalesce with a part of an enemy state in order to subvert that state. Thus India's fourth-century *Arthashastra*, attributed to Kautilya but perhaps of plural authorship at different times, recommends: "In all cases of strife among the members of an oligarchy, whether they arise by themselves or incited by assassins, the conqueror shall assist the weaker party with money and arms, make them fight the hostile group and urge them to kill their rivals" (Kautilya 1987, 522).

Alternatively, a state may coalesce with other states taken as if unitary actors in classic realist vein. Such concerns Kautilya's "mandala" theory, which envisions a circle with concentric bands. In the center is the favored state called the *conqueror*, the leader of which wants to add on conquered land. Just beyond it is a band of enemies, including the natural or principal

enemy most fearing loss of land to the conqueror. Beyond the ring of likely enemies is a second band of states that could be plausible allies for the conqueror, since they could want to annex land taken from the backside of the enemy, when viewed from the standpoint of the conqueror. No threat at all to the conqueror's territory (unless the principal enemy were wholly partitioned, thus giving them a common frontier), those in the second band constitute natural allies, readily offered generous slices of territory from the enemy's backside. Costless to the conqueror, it obviously would weaken the enemy state, perhaps enough so that the conqueror could take a slice of territory from the near side of that state. But if the allies divide it all among them, they themselves become adjacent and hence enemies.

Beyond the natural allies in the second band lies a third band of their enemies, followed by a fourth band of enemies to their enemies. When wishing to attack, the conqueror mobilizes assistance from the second band of states to weaken the target of his military march or to protect his rear when doing so. Or if the conqueror is in defensive mode, such alliances would merely weaken an attacking state by raising difficulties at that state's flanks or rear. The friendly second band may in its turn mobilize the fourth band. Kautilya allows that this pattern may be complicated by the presence of either a "middle" state, which is adjacent and could by itself defeat either the conqueror or its principal enemy when they are divided, or a nonadjacent "neutral" state, which could defeat individually the conqueror, the enemy, or the "middle" state, too.

In multipolar worlds in Machiavellian rules climates, for most states, the necessity of allies is offset by their treachery. Kautilya's theory predicted some alliance behavior in the multipolar context of the 1930s: Thus Czechoslovakia, facing Hungarian claims on its territory from the south, allied in the Little Entente with two second-band states, Yugoslavia and Romania. Facing other demands by Germany on the northern fringe of Bohemia called the *Sudetenland*, it also allied with second-band France (1934) and Russia (1935), although neither chose to fight when needed in 1938. The Czechoslovakians seemed to do everything right, yet their history then went badly: Without a shot fired, Hitler took away the *Sudetenland* in 1938. In 1939 he invaded the rest of Bohemia and Moravia, and he set up a puppet state in the Slovak half of the country. Among other weaknesses, mandala theory seems of limited applicability outside a relatively disorganized multipolar international system. Mandala theory may give undue attention to geographic positioning and strictly territorial conquest rather than to more direct measures of consonances and conflicts of interest. Although Americans invaded Canada during the War of 1812, the United States and Canada have not been enemies since. Note also that the adjacent territory that mandala theory assumes to be hostile can also be the territory that modern

nationalists could want to absorb, provided that ethnic similars reside on it.

Mandala theory illustrates that much of international relations, even when extending to war, concerns coalition politics. But if Richard Rosecrance is right, making war to conquer territory is an obsolete activity, now chiefly pursued by lesser powers in the world. They have not developed the modern mind-intensive labor economic base typical among the most advanced nations, which also fully recognize that influence over global capital flows is now what matters most. Rosecrance, in my view understating the hegemonic role of the United States, correctly identifies the emergence of a kind of grand coalition of the great powers to keep unruly smaller powers in line. "Today an informal international concert or encompassing coalition exists among the great powers" (Rosecrance 1999, 102). He acknowledges that it is somewhat like the 19th-century Concert of Europe, which eventually foundered in emergence of ideological division between conservative and liberal powers (Rosecrance 1999, 97-103).

In some ways international systems and party systems can be fruitfully analyzed in parallel, if alert for some differences, too, as when international alliances form against a common threat to security, which is not the normal motive of party coalitions. Yet in revolutionary contexts, sometimes domestic coalition partnerships may also be motivated by fear. Strange bed-fellow coalitions seem more common in international relations than in domestic politics.

There have been efforts to measure identities of subnational groups with a "feeling thermometer," whereby respondents begin by assigning about 50 degrees to a group toward whom they feel about neutral and then grade other groups as either downward toward zero (distrust) or upward toward 100 degrees (highest trust). When applied to members of the same country, this has been shown to reveal respondent *positivity bias*, or reluctance to score any groups negatively. But this does not seem true of use of the same instrument on peoples of other nations, which are often rated over a larger range. A list of American ratings of 23 countries in 1978, 1982, and 1986 shows that such ratings responded closely to current friendliness or hostility in foreign relations as well as to degrees of cultural similarity (Americans consistently liked fellow anglophones such as the Canadians or British) (cf. Wiarda 1990, 73). Cultural likenesses aside, clearly identifications with foreign peoples can be highly contingent upon the current state of relations between a pair of states, and hence often unstable.

Unfortunately soon allying himself with the Nazis, Carl Schmitt had argued in 1932 that we sort ourselves out as saliently similar and different, and then as friends or enemies, and it is this enmity that then creates a politics: "Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human

beings effectively according to friend and enemy" (Schmitt 1976, 37). It can extend to interstate war and was soon to be expressed in a second world war.

Alliance behavior varies considerably with variables of the strategic context, especially the international system and the rules climate. Fortunately for us all, the bipolar international system of the Cold War did not become a "tight" one that allied all world powers about the two poles on all matters over which fighting could occur. Even the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, when John Kennedy thought the odds of nuclear war were one in three or even one in two, may not have really come close to war, since the Soviets were weak in missiles and had decided not to go to war even if Kennedy had invaded Cuba (Mueller 1989, 152–55). However, Soviet local commanders had been given discretion on use of tactical nuclear weapons. Toward the end of the U.S.A.–U.S.S.R. confrontation, Robert Gilpin noted that "in the closing decades of the twentieth century, economic, political, and ideological cleavages are not coalescing but running counter to each other" (Gilpin 1981, 238). But the Soviet Union in 1986–90 indicated that it would not repress East Europe, which soon ceased to be Communist in 1989–90. The Soviet Union itself fell apart in 1991. Resurgent nationalist identities led to many small wars in the former Soviet sphere of influence, as well as Yugoslavia.

Before leaving the subject of international coalitions, I sketch some broad contrasts with domestic political coalitions in Figure 1.3. It is not surprising that often military allies are unreliable, not only in the sense that they may fail to go to the assistance of a partner but also in the sense that they often turn against a past or even present ally. But some of this is also true of domestic political coalitions, especially in contexts of domestic turbulence or civil war. As Machiavelli warned, it is always dangerous to conspire with anyone unless you know that he shares your motives.

### Domestic Political Coalitions

As defined here, *the political community coalition* is the population that supports the principal membership unit. It can include not only those who fully support it (they would oppose its dismemberment or its absorption by another state) but more loosely those who at least acquiesce in its continuance, either because they see it as legitimate or because they lack any power to change conditions.

Some earlier nations were nomadic, often permanently changing their primary place of residence (Armstrong 1982). When beyond nomadic tribes, the membership unit usually means the set of persons sharing a territory or homeland in interstate relations. The most common form of the principal membership unit today is called the *nation-state*, even if most of the world's some 195 states do not neatly fit a "nation." Most people

Figure 1.3  
International Alliances and Domestic Political Coalitions

<i>Alliances</i>	<i>Domestic Coalitions</i>
* like domestic coalitions, alliances are commitments to pool resources for certain shared or compatible aims. But as Stephen Walt emphasizes, they are mostly negative, mobilized against external threats (Walt 1987).	*often itself growing out of a military alliance, the community coalition can also be formed about an external threat. But regime, program, and leadership coalitions are often focused on domestic policies.
* security is a collective good and is hence not divisible in proportion to contributions, but conquered territory is sometimes so divided among victors.	*once common security is not the main consideration, the political community and other domestic coalitions often shift to economic goals.
* as Sabrosky notes, military allies often fail to come to the aid of an attacked partner (Sabrosky 1980). Indeed, allies are often quite likely to attack each other. This reminds us that Machiavelli said that sometimes promises are just another form of lying.	*the political community coalition, regime coalition, program, and leadership coalitions tend in that order to shorter durations, since defections occur most readily near the end of that series.
* often balancing leads leaders to ally with the weaker side. But greater uncertainties often cause alliances to become oversize coalitions. Some bandwagoning can bring late accessions into an alliance, especially when it is clear that the enemy is nearly defeated.	*while political community and regime may <i>aim</i> at grand coalition, they often do not attain it, whereas program and leadership coalitions tend to be closer to minimal winning, although often going oversize in civil war circumstances before power stabilizes.
* more strange bedfellows are likely in military alliances. In crises, one picks up partners where one can find them.	*strange bedfellows become less likely as one shifts to a type of coalition of normally narrower base, such as the program and leadership forms.

simply call it their *country*, if understood as the land with its people rather than also its regime. The paramount aim of this political community coalition is security in interstate relations, but a secondary aim can be an economic trading sphere. The first aim is most obvious in cases when military alliances grow into political communities. Sometimes this is evident in the growth of a large monarchy by imposition on smaller princes, but it can also develop by wholly voluntary adherence of the parts of the new whole. I mentioned the example of Great Britain in my Preface; I examine the cases of Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United States in the following chapter. But there I also show that most states have sprung from the disintegration of late modern empires, usually reflecting their administrative units. In addition to sharing a bounded residential location, often political community identities relate to one or more ethnonational bonds.

Usually a subset of the political community coalition, the *regime coalition* is the set of persons associated with the political community who support the fundamental features of the political order, the basic rules of the game, the framework of government, or what is often called the *constitution* if one formally or informally exists. Again one could distinguish those who are full supporters and those who are mere acquiescents, often because no alternative seems implementable or workable. The main aim of this coalition is some kind of domestic political order—not just any order, but one that implicitly tends to favor the coalition partners and their specific purposes. Thus the regime coalition of “federalists” who supported the U.S. Constitution of 1787 wanted among other aims to curb economic powers of unruly state legislatures, to create a common market, and to have a coordinated trade negotiation policy toward the outside world. Quite soon these would show their division into two distinctive program coalitions, those of the Federalist and Democratic–Republican Parties. If political community coalitions often focus about one or more ethnonational identities, regime coalitions, when not consociational, often reflect stratal identities, sometimes disguised in distinctive religious identities, as observed by Hume, Tocqueville, Marx, Kautsky, or Weber.

The *program coalition* is the set of people who unite around a common political agenda. Although program coalitions may relate to larger publics who identify with specific political factions or political parties, they tend to be most clearly expressed in a representative set of active political agents. Often a specific program coalition is in a governing position, able through a royal council, legislature, or other assembly, to work on implementation of its program. In parliamentary democracies, such coalitions are typically called *legislative* or *parliamentary coalitions*. Those concurring on a program and the principal coalition leader or *formateur* pledging loyalty to those commitments attempt to form a government. Members of a program coalition can reflect ethnic or stratal identities, but they often reveal regional or sectoral economic interests. That is, they share interests linked to

their livelihoods: agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, government employment, and the like. When not including attention to features of the political community or the regime, the main aim of a program coalition thus typically consists of an economic program dwelling around regulatory, revenue, and budgetary questions. But domestic and international security policies as well as social status or symbolic concerns can also have much presence in a program coalition or common agenda.

The *leadership* or *cabinet coalition*, which often crystalizes later and can sometimes change independently of the program coalition, is also known as the *executive* or *portfolio coalition*: Whereas it can be different in a direct-election presidential regime, in which leadership is selected by voters separately from members of parliament, it is often best viewed as a subset of the program coalition, even if both coalitions are expected to be supported by the unanimous votes of disciplined, coalesced party members. The price of breaking party discipline for individual legislators is normally future exclusion from any significant offices, if not even, in rare cases, denial of party support in any new parliamentary election. But whatever the outward show of unity, the coalition may be a subset that genuinely supports a specific allocation of cabinet portfolios, under the overall coalition leader (the parliamentary system chief executive, usually named *prime minister*, *premier*, or *chancellor*). Its responsibility is to placate the program or parliamentary coalition, to which it is ultimately answerable in a parliamentary democracy. But one can often discern even in nondemocratic regimes a distinction between the ruling coalition as a whole and that part which controls the current executive.

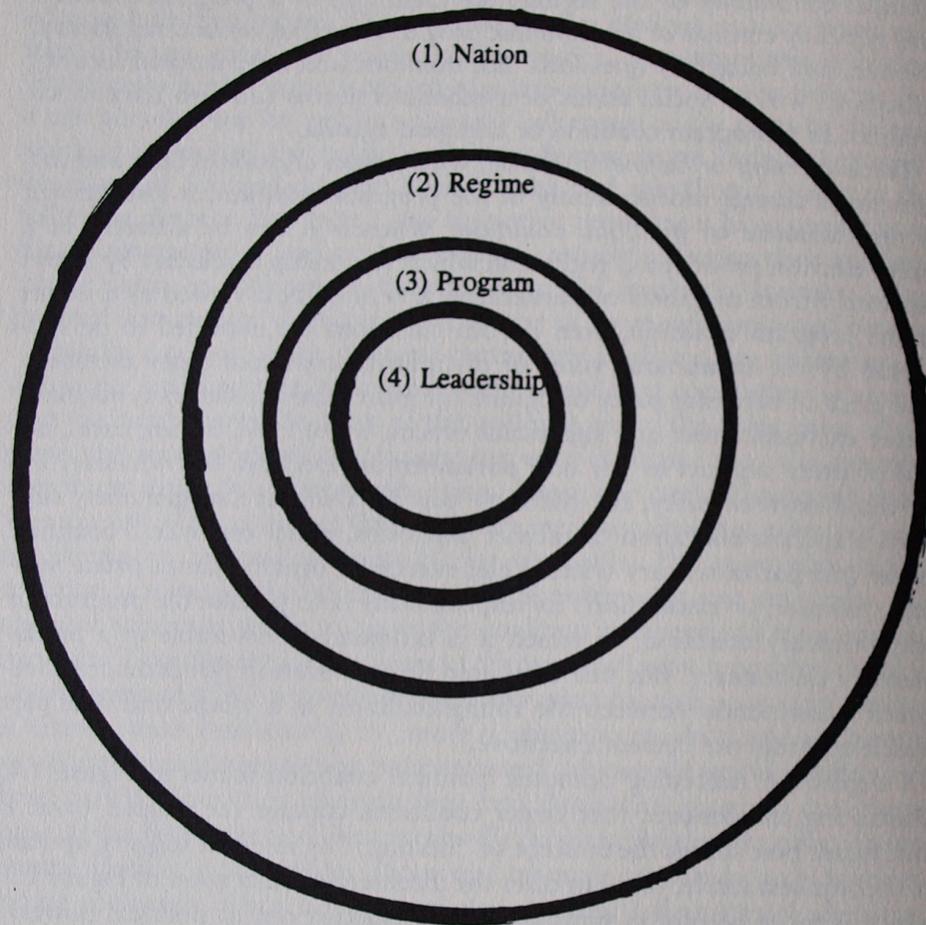
I depict the preceding domestic political coalition forms in Figure 1.4, illustrating the concept that larger coalitions contain the smaller ones. If that figure best shows the concept of “nesting,” by in effect tugging upward at the smallest circle, one can offer the alternative illustration of Figure 1.5, which is more helpful in symbolizing the peaking out of political power.

The second figure should help illustrate how the coalition “layers” may affect each other. Most of such impacts are through adjacent layers, as suggested by the linking arrows. The unequal sizes of ascending and descending arrows suggest my hypothesis that influences are asymmetric: The more basic coalition layers in the normal case usually cause greater constraints on what happens in the higher than vice versa.

Before addressing at greater length in later chapters the kinds of coalitions briefly defined here, I broadly preview what will be said as we move through the coalitions in the numerical order of our Figure 1.4 as well as Figure 1.5.

To start with, the coalitions normally develop in that sequence: Although some postmodernists like to speak of all identities as “constructed” or “constituted,” one must begin with a biological organism to have something there that can recognize a “self.” So one must begin with real world

Figure 1.4  
Four Normally Nested Coalitions

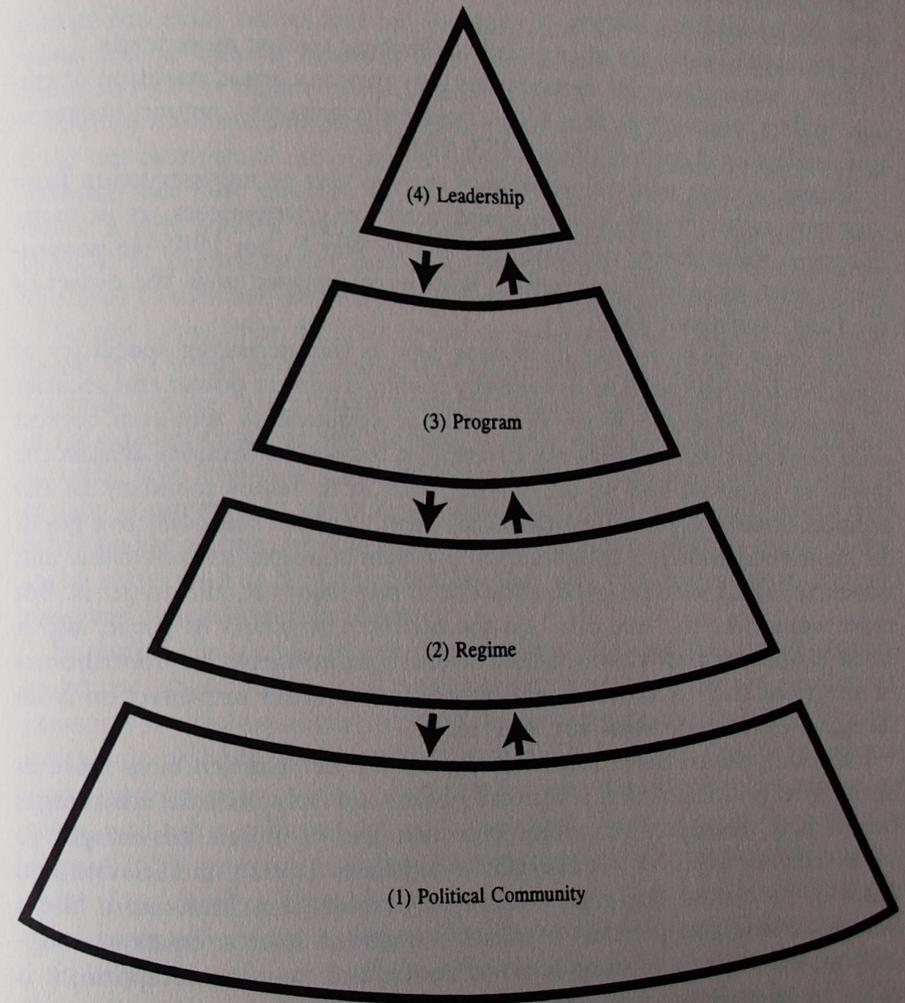


aggregates of peoples to bound them into smaller aggregations as well as coalitions that support them.

One normally establishes a political community before bothering to define a regime. Then one normally needs a program coalition before forming its cabinet coalition.

Again, in the sequence of political community, regime, program, and cabinet, we are moving from normally *implicit* coalitions (often not even recognized as coalitions until some partners attempt to leave them) to those that are more and more *explicit* (recognized by all as political coalitions). Put otherwise, unlike a nested set of Russian dolls (the *matryoshka*, or *mampëwka*), in which we see the smallest last, most tend to perceive the smallest coalition first, the largest perhaps not at all.

Figure 1.5  
Coalitions Out of Coalitions



Further, as depicted in both Figures 1.4 and 1.5, each successive coalition type has a normally narrower base than that which preceded it, such that each may often be viewed as a subset of the prior set.

One reason for the narrowing is that *grand coalition*, or a coalition including all major groups, becomes more difficult to implement and maintain across the series. That is, political agents may aim at and often achieve near grand coalition for the political community, but, apart from the consociational system as defined in the following, this often becomes increasingly elusive as one shifts to the regime coalition, the program coalition, and the leadership coalition.

Two special cases do offer grand coalition at two or more levels.

First, "consociational" democracies may pursue a grand coalition of ethnic "pillars" through all four levels, political community, regime, program, and leadership (Lijphart 1975; 1977; 1984).

Second, a great national emergency such as war or reconstruction from war may rather briefly involve grand coalition governments, as in many European states during and just after World War II, but 1945–46 governments often included Communists, who were dropped with the outset of the Cold War about 1947.

The other reason for the decreasing base is the increasing specificity of aims. Broadly, the *political community coalition* aims at power and security in interstate relations: When not aimed at conquest (a zero-sum contest with neighbors whose lands are coveted), it focuses on security against the threat of invasion, and so on, solving what is to fellow members of the political community a *collaboration problem* to attain this collective good. As mentioned earlier, a collaboration problem concerns an indivisible and nonexcludable collective good, such that if any enjoys it, all can get it. But most would like to "free ride" on the sacrifices of others to get it, and it often is not attained without added selective inducements for contributors or sanctions such as coercion of slackers. If you share in protection from foreign enemies, you *must* pay your share.

Excepting the consociational regime, the *regime coalition* aims more at an internal political order. It normally offers not only political advantages but in part through them more protection and economic advantages to some strata or layers of society relative to others. During its initiation and again at its demise, the regime coalition problem may look more like a Prisoner's Dilemma problem in which a common interest exists in cooperation, but because of poor communication and frequent deception, it is offset by an inclination to defect in order to secure a lesser private interest. If a regime has surmounted that distrust, the regime coalition typically works at managing its *impure coordination problem*, as by definition most want some kind of agreement on a frame of government (all but the anarchists want a political order) but have distinctive preferences among alternatives.

The *program coalition* also has to manage impure coordination problems, expressible as the problem of attaining justice in normally contested public policies. It may yet give some attention to physical security but shifts much attention to group advantages in the way of economic (regulatory, revenue, budgetary) policies and status policies. Often getting into zero-sum or even negative-sum conflicts with parties outside the coalition, a program coalition encounters sharp contests on many issue positions. To please some (e.g., those part of a parliamentary coalition) fully, one must displease others (any visible opposition factions or parties). Yet if one displeases too many others and too intensely, they may not only make themselves into a winning coalition and take power but sometimes threaten continuity of the regime or its underlying political community.

Finally, the *executive leadership* or *cabinet coalition* not only has parceled out elements of the program to the parties or factions in the program coalition but now specifies which persons shall hold which cabinet portfolios, a very specific matter of status and perquisites for appointed individuals. In parliamentary coalition governments, once the portfolios are allocated to member parties, they select their persons for those cabinet slots.

To the extent that the four levels of coalition have typically narrowing bases, it is virtually inevitable that some who may regard themselves as "friends" in the larger-based coalition regard themselves rather as "foes" in the smaller-based system. Indeed, if there were no neutrals to take into account, this would be logically inescapable. Hence agents who could be equally committed to the political community may be divided against each other on the regime, or if at one mind on the regime (largely true of older, stable states such as the United States), they may find themselves in opposed program or leadership coalitions.

Excepting the special case of consociational societies that aim at unanimity of the ethnic pillars at all levels, as one moves toward the smaller set, pressures toward unanimity increase: In parliaments not unanimity but majority rule prevails, but unanimity is demanded among the coalesced majority parliamentary parties. Austria's cabinets literally require unanimous votes, and other cabinets aim at "consensus" (but as part of the collective responsibility principle, cabinets almost anywhere present a public appearance of unanimity). By tradition, in Britain and elsewhere any member of the cabinet who wants to take a difference public is expected first to resign.

In another angle, most of the influence of one kind of coalition (or of the agents who act in it) is delivered directly to the adjacent layer (as on the arrows linking layers in Figure 1.5), often only indirectly and more weakly on any more distant layer. However, as noted earlier, there is some asymmetry in that the more basic layers normally constrain conduct (as well as enable) those above more than do the less basic ones constrain conduct (or enable) those below. One layer of coalition may often be de-

scribed as effectively giving a mix of prescriptions (mandates), permissions (options), and proscriptions (things forbidden) to an adjacent layer.

### Some Preliminary Notes on Coalition Stabilities

In working up Figure 1.5, along the arrows showing direction of an influence, it is usually the nonchange of a lower layer that helps to stabilize the layer above. But working down Figure 1.5, change of a higher layer often permits more stability to a lower one, as when small changes in cabinets permit survival of a parliamentary majority (program) coalition, or when changes in parliamentary governments permit survival of the democratic regime. As Canadians well know, often adaptive changes in even regimes are necessary for the survival of the political community. Later chapters cite relevant studies that show that most often change in a higher layer tends to stabilize the lower.

However, this is by no means a universal rule. It usually holds as long as such change either amounts to an accommodation of existing supporters or accommodates a demand for a bit more power by a group with the numbers, other resources, and so forth, to make that seem reasonable. Sometimes a significant change in the regime can build more unity in the political community.

Yet not all changes in a higher layer have an immediate stabilizing effect on more basic layers. It can sometimes cut the other way: Certain sharp departures from existing practices may sometimes alienate a coalition partner, especially when confronting such a group with a *major and abrupt loss of relative power*.

Thus in Nigeria in 1966, a coup against the democracy by junior (captain and major) officers was checked by higher officers, led by the Igbo major general Ironsi. But his change of the regime from democracy to military was followed by an attempt to change the regime further from federal to unitary. That was threatening to the northern, largely Islamic, Hausa-Fulani peoples, who even talked of secession. Instead, one of their most senior officers, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, upset at too many Igbo appointments to higher officer ranks, made another coup, overthrowing Ironsi. Gowon rescinded the order to install a unitary regime. However, the new program-coalition change now caused the Igbo to secede from Nigeria as Biafra, to be followed by the 1967-70 civil war, which forced the Igbo back into the political community (cf. Aborisade and Mundt 1999, esp. 14-21).

Similarly, only Montenegro, with a population of 600,000, and Serbia, with 10 million, remained in Yugoslavia when the former premier Milošević proposed constitutional reforms in 2000. Serbs would certainly dominate if he amended the constitution to permit direct election of the president and make himself eligible for a new term (his first term of 1997-2001 involved indirect election by parliament). They also opposed his wish

to end formal equality (20 votes each) of the two provinces in the upper chamber of parliament. Whereas Milošević was deposed in October 2000 after failing at election rigging, leaders of Montenegro continue to look for outside support for their secession.

Even a sharp change in *program and cabinet coalitions* can be threatening to a regionally based group that lacks a blocking veto against new, adverse policy.

During the period of post-Napoleonic Restoration in Europe, the Swiss in 1815 formed their Federal Pact, which was really a loose confederation of cantons with formidable trade barriers among themselves. The more conservative forces insisted that the pact could not be altered without unanimity of the cantons. After 1830 two kinds of largely Protestant liberals, radicals and moderates, became prominent in the majority of the cantons. They began demanding reforms such as free speech, expansions of the vote, and retrenchment of the Roman Catholic clergy from education. Contrary to the Federal Pact, such liberals of this movement called the *Regeneration* who had taken power in Aargau attempted to press some Protestant preferences on the Catholics. In 1841 they abolished eight Catholic convents linked to a failed Catholic armed rebellion. Lucerne correctly asserted its cantonal right by the Federal Pact to introduce Jesuits into its education. By 1845 seven conservative, Catholic-dominated cantons led by Lucerne, claiming legitimate self-defense but also arguably violating an article of the Federal Pact, secretly formed a confederation, the *Sonderbund*, within the larger Swiss confederation, defensive of cantonal sovereign equality. The central government Diet, dominated by liberals, voted revision of the Federal Pact and expulsion of the Jesuits. They chose in 1847 to repress the Catholic *Sonderbund* by main force; that was done with just over a hundred dead on both sides. The next year, the weak confederation was changed to a tighter federation (cf. Thüerer 1970, 97-111; Martin 1971, 203-24). But note here that at least this last change in the regime (modified in 1874 to permit referenda) ultimately preserved the Swiss political community.

In a like case of adverse policy expectations triggering revolt, American southerners in 1860 anticipated empowerment of Lincoln's new program coalition and its expected policies regarding slavery and tariffs adverse to the American South. Given failure much earlier to adopt John C. Calhoun's constitutional ideas of nullification and plural presidency, which would have meant a regime assuring the South's ability to block adverse policy, and given loss of a Senate majority to block new laws, this caused the South to secede. The 1861-65 U.S. Civil War by main force reconstituted the shattered political community.

In sum, adaptive change in the higher layers of coalition *normally* tends to stabilize more basic layers. Yet if a higher level of coalition attempts to deal out a steep loss of power to some group, those threatened with the

loss or actually experiencing it may defect from a lower-level coalition, threatening its stability.

Turning to another matter, there is often more overall violence in the creation and maintenance of the more basic levels of coalition (even for democracies), since defection from the coalition may not be legal or actually allowed. Even democracies may sometimes coerce defectors from the political community (a secessionist movement) or from the regime (if a revolutionary insurrection). In fact by international law, any state's sovereign right of "internal matters" includes the right to coerce secessionists; the Russians so argued as they repressed the secession of their province of Chechnya in 1999–2000. Yet such repressions must not cross a cusp to become genocide or crimes against humanity, such as that which led to a United Nations indictment of Milošević for his severe "ethnic cleansing" repression of ethnic Albanians in Serbia's Kosovo province, stopped by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing campaign.

Democracies at least favor uncoerced consent in the higher levels, protecting in law defections from a cabinet or parliamentary coalition. Dictatorships more often use force against defectors from coalitions at all levels, perhaps explaining in part their greater overall domestic political violence (Rummel 1997).

Perhaps in part because continued membership may be forced, but also because of deeper identity formations, the more basic levels of coalition tend on average to be more durable than the less basic-level ones. Whereas beginnings of some political communities are occasionally obscure, durations may often be directly measured. Long duration need not always entail stability, which cannot be directly observed or measured but only precariously inferred from such conditions as domestic political cleavage patterns, and so on. To cite Mario Bunge, "we cannot be sure that a system is in fact unstable unless we have a testable theory to explain why it is unstable" (Bunge 1996, 162).

If often lasting hundreds of years, political communities typically succumb to defeat in wars.

If on average lasting 20–30 years according to two studies cited in Chapter 3, regimes may also fall to wars but are also destroyed by economic stagnations that erode the regime coalition and bolster an internal antiregime coalition.

Program and cabinet coalition durations are, at least for democracies, often better measured in months, one study found a median of 30 months' duration.

Among other indicators, anomalous relative sizes (e.g., leadership coalition exceeds program coalition, program coalition exceeds regime coalition, or regime coalition exceeds political community coalition) can forecast likely instability. Thus support for a governing team may be much larger than that for the regime, often indicating imminent change of regime. This

was illustrated in Venezuela in 1999, when a highly popular new president quickly had a constitutional convention begin changes in the regime. Or again, after the failed KGB coup attempt in 1991, a coalition gathered about Boris Yeltsin was both antiregime and anti-political community, opposed to the continued existence of the Soviet Union. Although it is arguable that Yeltsin's dissolution of the Soviet Union reflected opposition to the Communist apparatus, official polls showed in the Russian public a wish to maintain the Soviet Union as a political community. That did not happen.

Instability is also predicted from presence of high *eccentricity*, a word originally connoting "off center." In one form of eccentricity, the anomalous case, coalitions may leave the normal nesting suggested in Figure 1.4. But in the almost normal case, it refers to the inability of coalitions to cover all relevant median issue spaces.

This last is not unexpected, because coalitions involve distinctive sets of persons. Hence a leader at the median of a leadership coalition may almost normally fail to be at the respective medians of the program coalition, the regime coalition, and the political community coalition. Although requiring more elaboration in the sequel, major eccentricity in this sense is a key predictor of major political change.

If great ethical teachers such as Gautama and Aristotle taught that the middle way is best, a teaching that Kant would call a *categorical judgment of value*, one can also argue that the middle way is also best in what Kant calls a *merely instrumental or means-ends judgment of value*. Against opponents of moderation such as Machiavelli, if one wants the *end* of attaining and holding power under normal conditions, one is usually best advised to follow the *means* of positioning oneself at or near the median of a potentially winning coalition.

On the face of it, many advantages accrue to the central position, whether in unidimensional political space (such as the familiar Left-Right spectrum) or in multidimensional policy space (sorted out by fields of policy, such as domestic security; international security; varying kinds of economic policy such as regulatory, revenue, or budgetary; or status and cultural). In the most abstract kind of argument, Duncan Black asked us to consider two factions or parties of single-peaked preference in one policy dimension. In a contest to be resolved by simple majority rule from a field of equal votes such as in a committee or a parliament, a stable majority tends to form that must include the median voter (Black 1958). Kadane added that in multidimensional space, a stable majority equilibrium is quite unlikely to form. Preference orderings are likely to cycle, especially if there are multiple factions or parties separable by dimension. Yet if a stable majority forms at all in such multidimensional issue space (more likely with single-peaked preference), it, too, includes median voters (Kadane 1972).

The mathematics aside, the reason is intuitively self-evident: Any coali-

tion that fails to include median voters *could* be defeated by a coalition that does. That rival coalition could be larger, if only by just one vote.

Even more than their predecessors, Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle have strongly argued that leaders can find their advantage in covering "median" positions in issue space, in the literal sense of those positions that leave half of the reference group on each side (Laver and Shepsle 1996). They extend such arguments, offering more mathematical deduction, simulation, and some empirical testing, to confirm the advantages of covering median positions, whether in electorate, parliament, or within any unified parliamentary majority, for the logic of median theory would evidently extend to many sorts of coalition in which one could plausibly think of issue positions as spatially arrayed.

If median positions have obvious advantages, why do we not find more leaders striving to be at the middle of the pack, and thereby stabilize political coalitions of any type? Although I do not deny the theoretical advantages stated by Laver and Shepsle, in practice it may be extremely difficult to attain and retain leadership by covering *all* relevant median positions. To explore some problems with the claimed advantages in covering medians, one must compare and contrast the types of coalitions, dwelling, as noted, on those that are normally "nested" and in some ways interdependent.

If the political center (or median preference in various salient policy dimensions) has everything going for it, one would think that most parliamentary and cabinet coalitions would be center-tending to maximize chances of stable equilibrium. By extension, similar centrism would also stabilize the relatively implicit political coalitions behind a regime and the political community. In fact, we know that if some political communities last for centuries, others soon fall apart. Regimes rarely last centuries and average, as noted, at most a few decades. Whereas a few autocrats long hold their office, democratic executives on average last but a few years or have a median of only 30 months in democracies, by Bingham Powell's account cited in Chapter 5. Many governments fail to survive even one year, not only in a parliamentary system such as Italy's, but even in some military regimes such as Bolivia's in one period of rapid turnovers of top leadership by coups d'état.

Instabilities of some coalitions are clearly pervasive. One reason is that there are multiple and usually distinctive medians in political community, regime coalition, program coalition, and leadership coalition, and it is virtually *impossible* for any leader simultaneously to hold them all. Being "centric" for one coalition means being "eccentric" for another, especially if the coalitions in some aspects fail to nest at all.

This is why so many leaders not ruling by repression perforce turn to rhetoric to seek the *seeming* of centralities normally not attainable in *being*, for it is feasible for such varied figures as Oliver Cromwell or Yasir Arafat

(who are discussed near the end of Chapter 5) to use rhetoric to *seem* rather than really *be* at the multiple median positions. Although apparently ending his political career as mayor of Oakland, California, the former governor of that state, Jerry Brown, once quipped, "A little vagueness goes a long way in this business." True, but he once aspired to be president of the United States.

Now that I have thus signaled some of my conclusions at the outset, the elaborated meaning and some defense of each statement unfold in due course. All that said, I now offer closer examination of the distinctive forms of political coalition listed on Figure 1.4 or Figure 1.5. I examine them in the normal sequence of their emergence: political community coalition, its regime coalition, its program coalition, and its leadership coalition.

# 6 Legislative party discipline and cohesion in comparative perspective

*Sam Depauw and Shane Martin*

## Introduction

It is hard to envisage representative government, save in terms of unified political parties. Legislative voting unity is a precondition for responsible party government. Existing scholarship has focused extensively on explaining patterns of unified party voting within legislatures by references to presidential versus parliamentary forms of government (see, e.g., Bowler *et al.* 1999; Carey 2007; Tsebelis 2002). Institutions associated with parliamentary systems, such as the vote of confidence mechanism, are said to enhance party voting unity (Huber 1996). Explanations of variation in party voting unity across parliamentary regimes have been limited.

Our aim, beyond a mere description of the behaviour of legislators in casting floor votes, is to build on the scarce exceptions that attempt to link party unity in the legislature and the varying degree to which electoral and other institutions shape the behaviour of legislators (Carey 2007; Depauw 2003; Hix 2004; Hix *et al.* 2005; Sieberer 2006), and progress towards a general comparative framework that allows us to explain variation in the level of party voting not just between different political systems but also between parties operating in the same political system. The institutions that we focus on are the electoral system, the candidate selection system and the opportunities that party leaders have to promote legislators to higher political office.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding recent attempts to introduce a comparative approach to understanding party unity the problems with this existing body of knowledge are manifold. Most analysis has tended to employ only system (country) level variables. While the unit of analysis should typically be at the level of the individual legislative party the institutional explanations posited are at a different, higher level. For one thing, this eliminates the possibility of explaining differing levels of voting unity among political parties in the same legislature.

Perhaps even more damaging has been the lack of cross-national data on legislator voting behaviour. Even the Döring project that did so much to uncover and report data on so many aspects of legislative politics in Europe was nevertheless unable to systematically collect data on voting unity (Saalfeld 1995a: 557). Even for those legislatures where votes are commonly recorded, the records are not made easily available (Carey 2007).

Another possible explanation for the dearth of cross-national research on the topic is the controversies surrounding the most commonly used indicator of party unity, Rice's index of cohesion. The index of cohesion is computed as the absolute difference between the proportion of party members voting in favour and the proportion of party members voting in opposition, multiplied by 100 to obtain a number ranging from 0 to 100.

It is worth repeating and attempting to deal with some of the controversies before beginning our analysis. First, recorded votes are not a *random selection* of votes (Carrubba *et al.* 2006; Hug 2005; Saalfeld 1995a). Recorded votes are typically called for by party leaderships for reasons of disciplining or signalling: to allow their party's legislators to be monitored or to denounce important differences of opinion in the other parties. Both reasons, however, can be expected to have opposite effects on party voting unity scores. On a related issue, as recorded votes increase in number, they tend to include more minor matters (e.g., resolutions, amendments) and therefore to exhibit more unity: on those minor matters only those legislators most interested in leadership positions will attend and they are more likely to toe the party line (Carrubba *et al.* 2006). Indeed, Hug (2005) notes that party unity scores are higher for those votes in the Swiss parliament that are automatically recorded; for example final votes or votes on urgency measures.

Second, the index of cohesion tends to overestimate unity in *smaller parties*. A majority of members voting 'the wrong way' (i.e., against the party line) pushes cohesion upward and this is more likely to happen in small parties. Yet the bias appears to decrease as parliamentary party group size exceeds a minimal number of members and groups are more cohesive – both of which apply to our sample of parties (Desposato 2005). Third, interpreting *non-votes* and *abstentions* is by no means straightforward – the option of abstention is not recorded in all legislators for instance. Excluding both non-votes and abstentions is the more conservative option when attempting to measure voting unity (Cowley and Norton 1999), and this is the approach we employ here. Finally, Krehbiel points out that the Rice index cannot discriminate between situations of perfect and no party discipline at all. That is, the index does not take into account *legislators' preferences*. Under conditions of perfect discipline, legislators vote together *even when* their preferences diverge, while under conditions of no discipline legislators may still vote together but *only* when their preferences converge (Krehbiel 1993, 2000).

In what follows we explain how variation in key political institutions which shape the behaviour of legislators will likely have an impact on the level of observed party voting unity. Using a mix of party-level and system-level data, we then empirically test the arguments that the design of political institutions affects party voting unity. We compile or bring together data on the voting behaviour of legislators in over 90 parties in 16 legislatures.<sup>2</sup> As we can see from Table 6.1, party voting unity tends to be lowest in Finland and highest in Ireland and Denmark. Combining our voting unity data with system and party-level data permits a theoretical and empirical analysis of the variation in legislative voting unity between parties that has not been possible to date. We conclude the chapter with a review of our findings and suggestions for future research in the area.

Table 6.1 Party unity in 16 European democracies

Country	Period covered	No. of parties	Mean	St. dev.
Australia	1996–98	3	99.07	0.15
Austria	1995–97	5	98.68	1.45
Belgium	1991–95	9	99.06	0.75
Canada	1994–95	4	97.60	2.24
Denmark	1994–95	7	99.93	0.11
Finland	1995–96	7	88.63	2.59
France	1993–97	4	99.33	0.63
Germany	1987–90	3	96.33	1.79
Iceland	1995–96	6	96.93	2.84
Ireland	1992–96	3	100.0	0.00
Israel	1999–00	10	96.88	1.15
Italy (1st Republic)	1987–92	9	97.52	1.60
Italy (2nd Republic)	1996–01	11	96.46	1.44
New Zealand	1993–94	2	93.17	0.65
Norway	1992–93	6	95.90	0.52
Sweden	1994–95	7	96.57	1.51
United Kingdom	1992–97	2	99.25	0.49

## Determinants of party voting unity

### *The electoral system, personal vote and party voting unity*

While the shape, origin and consequences of different electoral rules are generally well documented, their impact on legislative behaviour, most notably on party unity in legislative votes, is not always well understood. For example, German legislators elected via single member districts choose different legislative committee assignments than legislators elected under the party list (Stratmann and Baur 2002). Cox and McCubbins (2007) argue that the ties that bind candidates' electoral fates together are responsible for party unity. These ties reflect the *party reputation* based on the state of the economy, major pieces of legislation and in their argument the reputation of the president. Legislators are ready to comply with party unity when an unfavourable party reputation might seriously damage their own electoral prospects. Such an unfavourable party reputation might result from overspending, as legislators chase pork-barrel benefits for their constituencies, or even from open in-fighting in the legislature. But when candidates cannot hope to benefit from spill-over votes from co-partisans, they will focus on cultivating a personal vote. In those circumstances, they are more inclined to point out differences with their party than legislators whose electoral incentives are more aligned with their party.

Depending on the ballot structure, legislators have varying incentives to appeal to voters over party leaders. In more candidate-centred electoral environments, incumbent politicians will actively respond to and build personal relations with individual constituents in their district. In more party-centred electoral systems,

incumbents focused on re-elections have greater incentives to cultivate favour with their party leadership in the hopes of securing a prominent position on the party list. Carey and Shugart (1995) offer such a method to rank-order electoral systems according to the value of a personal vote on the basis of the interaction between ballot control, vote pooling and type of votes on the one hand, and district magnitude on the other. Where *intra-party competition* is present, greater district magnitude increases the need for a personal vote as the number of co-partisans on the list increases. Yet when intra-party competition for votes is absent, the possibility of a personal vote decreases as district magnitude grows.

The presence of such intra-party competition is defined by ballot control, vote pooling, and type of votes. *Ballot control* refers to the degree of control district-level party leaders have over access to the party label and voters' ability to upset their proposed list. The *pooling of votes* indicates whether votes for one candidate also contribute to the number of seats won by other candidates of the same party. The *type of votes* is determined by the form of the ballot paper that voters are presented with – voters may vote for a party, for multiple candidates or for a single candidate. As voters may only vote for a single candidate (vote), those votes are not pooled (pool), and those votes do 'upset' the party list (ballot), the intra-party competition increases and candidates search for a personal vote – if needs be by voting against the party line (Carey and Shugart 1995).

With *district magnitude*, the intra-party competition increases and candidates are forced to seek out a personal vote – that is, when the ballot structure allows for such competition. On the other hand, with district magnitude, the information demands on voters, too, increase rapidly. Voters can hardly keep up with voting records of multiple incumbents. District magnitude, thus, might have a different impact depending on the type of vote. In closed-list systems, district magnitude increases party unity. In open-list systems, party unity decreases with district magnitude. But in those circumstances, an independent voting record may not be the only, or even the most effective, means to court a personal vote. Shugart *et al.* (2005) argue that district magnitude increases the number of candidates who have local roots or have served in local elected positions within the district in 'pure' open-list systems: social characteristics become more important as candidates hope to attract personal support.

Despite the seminal character of Carey and Shugart's contribution, research on the relationship between ballot structure and voting unity has yielded only mixed empirical success. Focusing on the European Parliament, Hix (2004) finds a relationship between voting unity within the party group and the electoral system by which the MEP was elected (see also Hix *et al.* 2005). Sieberer (2006) argues that incentives to cultivate personal votes should be associated with lower unity in the parliamentary party group. Differentiating between three categories of electoral systems, Sieberer (2006) finds that voting unity is marginally stronger in candidate-centred than party-centred electoral environments. However, an intermediate electoral environment creating mixed incentives for personal vote and party vote cultivation is most strongly associated with higher voting unity, questioning the validity of the argument that voting unity is a function of electoral rules and in

particular the need to cultivate personal votes. More recently, Carey (2007) reaches a different conclusion, finding evidence that the level of intra-party electoral competition, considered a defining feature of personal-vote electoral systems, helps explain variation in voting unity. Given the theoretical interest in the effect of electoral rules on party unity and the only mixed evidence that such relationships withstand empirical scrutiny, we attempt to measure more accurately the effect of ballot structures on party voting unity.

One reason for these mixed results may be that the interaction effect at the heart of Carey and Shugart's thinking renders operationalisation more difficult. A second reason regards the uncertainty surrounding single-member district (SMD) plurality systems. Carey and Shugart code SMDs among the systems least encouraging the development of intra-party competition and therefore a personal vote, while Wallack *et al.* (2003) maintain that there is room for a personal vote in those circumstances and code SMDs accordingly. Both appear to be right: the search for a personal vote in SMDs is not inspired by intra-party competition (at least not in any single election), but by the necessity to court the *median voter* in the district. As long as the opinions of the local median voter sufficiently differ from the national median voter, there might be a reason for MPs to dissent. Finally, the ballot indicator combines a characteristic of the electoral system with one of the party selection process. On the electoral system level, ballot indicates whether votes for candidates can actually 'upset' the party list. On the party level, ballot captures whether party leaders can present lists at all. The latter aspect might in fact be better captured by the candidate selection process.

In sum, we suggest that political parties which operate in electoral systems that provide less incentive to cultivate a personal vote will be more likely to have higher levels of unified legislative voting than political parties operating under electoral rules where electors choose between individual candidates rather than political parties. Where a difference exists between the preference of constituents (the median constituent or an electorally significant sub-constituency) and the party leadership we would expect the electoral system to shape the voting decision of the legislator to vote with or against the party.

### ***Candidate selection and party voting unity***

The process by which candidates for legislative office are selected and or reselected remains one of the most overlooked aspects of politics (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Rahat and Hazan 2001). While, as we discussed above, attention has focused on the nature and impact of electoral systems, much less is known about how candidate reselection procedures impact the behaviour of individual legislators. Yet, if re-election is the goal of incumbent legislators then the proximate aim is to get reselected as a candidate – in effect to secure access to the ballot, or as high as possible a position under list electoral systems. We should note that the critical issue here relates not just to ballot access but the ability to be associated with the party label. An incumbent may easily access a ballot by paying a registration fee and or collecting signatures; we are primarily interested in how much

the party leadership controls access to the party label for prospective candidates. In a general sense, as Strøm (1997) was one of the first to note, what an incumbent must do to be reselected is likely to influence their legislative strategies and role orientation.

Of course, processes of candidate selection are complex undertakings, involving many dimensions and even more actors. Rahat and Hazan (2001) have argued that at least the dimensions of inclusiveness and centralisation should be separated. Inclusiveness of the process refers to the number of actors that are part of the selectorate. Centralisation, on the other hand – and this is the key concern here – regards the degree of control the central party leadership has over the (re)selection processes vis-à-vis other actors in the process, most commonly local party executives.

Indeed, much of the impact of the ‘party-centredness’ of electoral rules may be logically attributed to candidate selection procedures and in particular the risk of being deselected by the national party leadership. Carey (2007), for instance, found party unity to be lower in both presidential and parliamentary systems where legislative candidates compete against co-partisans for personal votes. But he effectively contrasted parties where candidates compete against co-partisans for personal votes with parties where nominations are controlled by party leaders. In fact, Poiré (2002: 21) reported that electoral rules failed to predict party unity in over 60 political parties in the 1950s and 1960s, when candidate selection procedures were included. Hix (2004: 20), on the other hand, concluded that the defection rate of MEPs from their national parties is more affected by candidate-centred rules than decentralised selection procedures. The latter effect is in the predicted direction, but not statistically significant. Sieberer (2006) found that party voting unity is slightly higher in parties where the leadership has some formal control over candidate selection, and that candidate selection is a better predictor of party voting unity than electoral rules.

Building on this body of research and unclear empirical results, we predict a direct causal link between the degree of control party leaders exert over the candidate reselection process and the level of unified party voting. Lundell (2004) developed a five-point ordinal scale to measure this degree of centralisation. Essentially it is a reduced version of Janda’s nine-point scale, collapsed over the inclusiveness dimension (Janda 1980).<sup>3</sup> In our empirical analysis, Lundell’s data on candidate selection rules is supplemented with information from Gallagher and Marsh (1988), Gallagher *et al.* (2005) and Narud *et al.* (2002) – in particular on countries that have legally regulated candidate selection procedures: Finland, Germany and Norway.

Detailed information on the inclusiveness of selectorates is generally lacking. Yet something of its impact can be found in the impact of the membership organisation. Ozbudun (1970) distinguished two strands of the argument. The first emphasises that party unity is greater in mass membership parties than in parties where the membership organisation is not the dominant decision-making centre. The second maintains that a mass membership is sufficient – dominant or not in the party. On the other hand, as the proportion of the party electorate that

is also a member of the party increases, party unity is expected to decrease: mass membership is not only a unifying force, it is also likely to be more diverse and thus provide dissenting members cover. Members at the party's more extremist wings often claim to be loyal to the party's orthodoxies when they dissent.

### ***Opportunities for promotion and party voting unity***

The motivation of legislators may very well extend beyond the desire to get re-elected or re-elected (Strøm 1997). For example, legislators may feel secure in the knowledge that they will be re-elected or re-elected. More probably, it could be argued that once elected, legislators in parliamentary systems are strongly motivated by the desire to gain leadership positions within the party, which they hope would ultimately lead to a ministerial seat (Huber and Shipan 2002: 197). In parliamentary systems the executive, by which we mean prime minister, cabinet and junior ministers, typically emerges from and is populated by members of the legislature (Gallagher *et al.* 2005). This is at odds with presidential government, where separation of powers requires that the head of executive be directly elected and the executive cabinet be composed of non-legislators. The difference in approach to staffing the cabinet in parliamentary and presidential systems probably explains why most theories of legislative behaviour, rooted as they are in congressional politics, start and end in assuming that legislators are motivated by re-election (the classic example being Mayhew 1974).

To re-emphasise our point, in parliamentary systems legislators care greatly about reselection and re-election but they are also motivated by the desire to gain even higher political office, similar to what Carroll *et al.* (2006) describe as *mega-seats*. Such political office is typically at the discretion of the party leader. In effect, the party leadership can use the potential for promotion to the ranks of government as a form of control over individual legislators.<sup>4</sup> The tight grip typically held over the legislative agenda by the cabinet under parliamentarism makes individual cabinet ministers the prime initiators of policies – almost to the exclusion of all other legislators (Laver and Shepsle 1996). The autonomy that cabinet ministers are awarded differs remarkably between countries and so may the desirability of the position. Hallerberg (2004: 16) distinguishes between systems of delegation (where the prime minister gives ministers detailed instructions), commitment (where detailed policy agreements restrict ministers' discretion) and fiefdom (where ministers have relative autonomy over decisions in their jurisdiction).

While the practice of including only serving legislators in the cabinet may differ from country to country, promotion is mostly in the hands of the party leadership. And that provides a powerful incentive for motivated politicians not to dissent from the party leadership in legislative votes. The more opportunities that exist for promotion, the more legislators will be inclined to yield to the party leadership. We argue, therefore, that where legislators stand a stronger chance of being promoted to the ranks of government party voting will be more unified. Where the prospects for leadership are more limited, individual legislators

are more likely to rebel against the party leadership, resulting in lower levels of unified party voting.

It is worth noting that this argument is not restricted to governing parties, assuming that no one political party continually monopolises executive seats. In most circumstances, legislators from non-governing parties will be acutely aware that their party may be in government at some point in the future and if or when that time arrives the party leadership may look to them. Hence, we expect to see government and non-government legislators responding to the varying prospects for higher political office. Nevertheless, the promise of promotion may play out differently in governing and non-governing parties as that promise is more uncertain as it lies further in the future.

To quantify the opportunities for ministerial promotion we collected data on the number of government posts filled by legislators in each country included in this study.<sup>5</sup> Logically, a legislator with 99 colleagues is, *ceteris paribus*, more likely to have realistic ambitions of obtaining promotion than a legislator operating in a parliament of 200 members. Consequently our measure of ministerial opportunity controls for the size of the legislature and the member's party. We present two measures of opportunity for ministerial promotion: the variable *Cabinet* measures the number of available senior ministerial positions per legislator. The broader *Government* measures the number of cabinet and sub-cabinet ministerial posts available per legislator.

Having identified how the design of institutions shapes the actions and behaviour of legislators, we proceed in the next section to test empirically the claims that electoral systems, candidate selection rules and promotional prospects impact the level of party voting unity under parliamentarism. First, we will look at bivariate regressions because a small sample size limits the degrees of freedom. Second, the effects of electoral systems, candidate-selection rules and promotional prospects will be combined in multivariate regressions.

## **Empirical analysis**

Centralisation of the candidate selection procedures has a strong impact on party unity in our selection, when using Lundell's five-point scale. With every additional point on the scale towards national party control over nomination, party unity increases – that is, when the first and second point on the scale are combined. As the national leadership enters the selection process, a party's unity scores increase almost three points on the Rice index. As the national leadership further strengthens its control over the process, beyond merely ratifying local decisions, unity scores further increase. The difference between the first and second point on Lundell's scale is related to the inclusiveness of the party selectorate rather than to centralisation. While the composition of party selectorates is not an unimportant concern in intra-party politics, its impact on cohesion is sketchy at best and cohesion itself is only imperfectly related to discipline, which is in fact what we observe.

Candidate selection procedures affect party unity irrespective of a party's position in or out of office, the majority's margin or the size of parliamentary

parties – although the effect of the strongest centralisation category is not significant. Because of space limitations, however, only the bivariate regressions are listed in Table 6.2. Parties of all sizes have long solved the issue by developing formal means of discipline. In fact, party unity is strongest in the larger parties. Larger parties are slightly more likely to have developed centralised nomination processes, for one. As a result, the effect of party size disappears after controlling for candidate selection, whereas the effect of the nomination process remains unaffected.

Contrary to what is often expected, being part of the government reduces rather than reinforces party unity, even if the impact of office is not significant. That expectation has largely been fuelled by the debate on the impact of presidential and parliamentary institutions – the vote of confidence in particular – on party unity. Jackson (1968), however, pointed out that opposition parties may remain absent when they face considerable dissent with little harm to the party reputation. The government side has no such option. While from a longitudinal perspective, it is plausible, for instance, that political parties develop centralised nomination processes in response to the shock of losing office, cross-sectionally candidate selection processes and being in or out of office are largely unrelated.

The impact of centralisation is reinforced by the party membership organisation. As the proportion of party voters that are also party members increases, party unity suffers. This, in turn, may be an indication of the impact of inclusiveness and diversity of the party membership. Parties with a mass membership are more likely to have developed centralised nomination processes. After controlling for the effect of a large membership organisation, however, party unity continues to increase as nomination processes are more centralised. In particular, the effect of the most centralised condition is strengthened. Thus, the proportion of party members to the party electorate reflects the inclusiveness of the nomination process, which is not captured by the centralisation of the nomination processes. Especially in Finnish parties, a large membership compared to the party electorate plays a crucial role in selecting the parties' candidates. The members use the cover that this provides vis-à-vis the party leadership to dissent more often.

In addition to candidate selection procedures, electoral rules that provide incentives to cultivate a personal vote reduce party unity. As Hallerberg and Marier's (2004) index of personal vote increases, party unity decreases.<sup>6</sup> To be fair, the impact is not strong and largely depends on the precise coding rules for various electoral rules. Single-member district systems, for instance, have been considered both among the most candidate-centred (Wallack *et al.* 2003) and the most party-centred electoral rules (Carey and Shugart 1995). In fact, Carey and Shugart's original rank order appears more consistent with the practice of party unity than Wallack's coding. But even the Carey/Shugart rank order overestimates the incentives that ordered-list proportional systems provide to cultivate a personal vote. In that respect, the Hallerberg coding appears more correct – acknowledging that parties often have established other means to restrict the impact of these personal votes. For one, party votes might be redistributed in the order of the list, thus adding another obstacle for candidates ranked lower.



Government									0.436				
*Autonomy									(0.815)				
*Office													
Membership										-0.073			
										(0.034)**			
Office											-0.195		
											(0.658)		
Majority margin												0.007	
PPG size												(0.005)	
													0.007
Constant	95.499	98.144	97.598	98.013	96.577	96.308	97.257	96.804	97.732	97.081	96.855	96.653	(0.003)**
	(0.655)***	(0.646)***	(0.530)***	(0.308)***	(0.672)***	(0.495)***	(0.880)***	(0.557)***	(0.382)***	(0.323)***	(0.312)***	(0.382)***	
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.137	0.029	-0.004	0.145	-0.005	0.137	-0.009	-0.009	0.189	-0.009	-0.004	0.113	
F	5.74***	2.190	0.960	7.06***	0.740	5.090**	0.160	0.290	4.59**	0.090	1.970	6.31**	
	(3.94)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	(1.96)	
N	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	

Notes: \* Significant at 10%; \*\* Significant at 5%; \*\*\* Significant at 1%

In addition, party leaders ranked at the top of the list often get more than their proportional share of these personal votes, thus further reducing their impact.

As mentioned, the electoral rules that provide incentives to cultivate a personal vote include the ballot structure, the pooling of votes, the number of votes, and district magnitude (Carey and Shugart 1995). None of these rules, however, is able to consistently explain party unity on its own. Nevertheless, as the selection of cases does not include cases where the party leadership does not control access to the ballot, party unity increases as voters cannot ‘disturb’ the list. In addition, party unity decreases as voters cast a single vote below the party level and those votes are pooled across the list. In particular, the latter runs counter to the expected effect of intra-party competition. The effect of vote pooling, however, differs remarkably from one coding rule to the next: to be more precise, from one rule of coding SMDs to the next. The counterintuitive result appears to be largely driven then by unity in the Finnish parties. With district magnitude, party unity decreases – indicating that growing intra-party competition may in fact outweigh the effect that increasing voters’ information demands may have on the propensity to defect from the party line. The difficulties that voters face to keep track of the voting records of tens of incumbents do not seem to mean that a strategic dissenting vote will pass unnoticed. In fact, it is something of a surprise that personal vote has an impact at all. After all, a personal vote can be based on a number of activities and characteristics; for example, local office, pork-barrel benefits, celebrity status, which may or may not have an impact on a legislator’s voting record.

Finally, the level of observed party unity in parliamentary systems is related to opportunities for ministerial promotion when combined with ministerial autonomy. The prospect of promotion effectively silences dissent only when the position actually promises an impact on policy. For this purpose, the number of cabinet positions compared to the parliamentary party group size is too crude a measure. The number of either cabinet or junior minister positions in itself does not affect party unity significantly. Only in combination with government type and government status does the prospect of promotion loom sufficiently large in the minds of members. Party unity increases as the number of cabinet positions available rises *and* ministerial autonomy is strengthened from a situation where it is severely curtailed by the prime minister or a detailed policy agreement to a situation of ministerial fiefdom. Furthermore, only a more immediate prospect of promotion has that effect: in opposition parties, future promotion doesn’t cast its shadow forward that much. To capture this, the number of cabinet positions is weighted by 0.5 in opposition parties. Note, however, that party unity is unrelated to government type in itself and that unity is actually stronger in parties currently out of office. Yet combined with the number of cabinet positions, government type and government status are positively and significantly related to party unity – even if the impact is not substantively large. An increase by 10 per cent, for instance, in the proportion of cabinet positions is expected to raise party unity by 0.15 in opposition. The increase is expected to rise further to 0.86 if the party was in office *and* ministerial autonomy was at its strongest. In fact, the impact of

Table 6.3 Party unity and electoral rules

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>			<i>Model 3</i>			<i>Model 4</i>
	<i>Carey/Shugart</i>			<i>Wallack et al.</i>			<i>Hallerberg</i>			
Ballot	-1.623 (0.726)**			-2.571 (0.945)***			-2.824 (0.656)***			
Pool		2.707 (0.377)***			0.541 (0.391)			2.707 (0.377)***		
Vote			-0.868 (0.598)			-0.928 (0.552)*			-2.449 (0.691)***	
District magnitude										-0.715 (0.366)*
Constant	98.039 (0.401)***	96.830 (0.322)***	97.832 (0.477)***	99.331 (0.815)***	96.753 (0.402)***	98.047 (0.501)***	97.831 (0.236)***	96.830 (0.322)***	97.820 (0.248)***	97.659 (0.413)***
Adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.097	0.036	0.027	0.153	0.005	0.0312	0.296	0.036	0.230	0.008
<i>F</i>	5.00** (1.96)	51.68*** (1.96)	2.08 (1.96)	74.000*** (1.96)	1.910 (1.96)	2.830* (1.96)	18.5*** (1.96)	51.68*** (1.96)	12.55*** (1.96)	3.82* (1.96)
<i>N</i>	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97

Notes: \* Significant at 10%; \*\* Significant at 5%; \*\*\* Significant at 1%

promotion further increases if the weight of the opposition parties is lowered from 0.5.

The difference between cabinet and junior government positions tells much the same story. In itself, the relationship with party unity is even in the wrong direction: unity decreases as the number of junior minister positions available increases. Yet combined with government type and government status the relationship is in the right direction – though not significant. Legislators, therefore, appear more motivated by the prospects of attaining a seat at the cabinet level than by the opportunity to serve as a junior minister – despite the fact that holding a junior ministerial post may be a stepping stone to securing a full cabinet seat.

The impact of candidate selection, personal vote, promotion and membership on party unity is hardly affected, when their effects are combined in multivariate analysis (Table 6.4). Voting unity is strongest in parties where candidate selection processes are centralised, in parties where the chances of promotion to an autonomous cabinet position are the greatest, in parties where the party electorate does not extend far beyond the party membership and in parties operating under electoral rules that do not encourage the cultivation of a personal vote.

Table 6.4 Multivariate analyses

	<i>Robust model</i>		<i>Fixed effect models</i>			
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Candidate selection						
3	2.832	.644***	0.319	0.542	0.022	0.547
4	2.463	.683***	0.412	0.525	0.062	0.532
5	1.367	0.703*	0.764	0.725	0.334	0.764
Personal vote	-0.522	0.143***	-1.062	0.148***	0.171	0.137
Cabinet *Autonomy	3.816	1.164***	2.526	1.289*	2.280	1.121*
*Office						
Membership	-0.090	0.037**	-0.068	0.041	-0.017	0.041
Australia			5.486	.667***	1.831	0.460***
Austria			2.727	1.086**	2.481	1.099***
Belgium			1.823	0.468***	2.023	0.501***
Denmark			4.973	0.541***	2.468	0.425***
Finland					-9.056	1.386***
France			2.931	0.629***	2.878	0.614***
Ireland			7.792	0.862***	2.319	0.576***
Italy (1987)			6.537	0.102***		
New Zealand			-3.747	0.560***	-3.720	0.564***
Norway					-0.917	0.405***
United Kingdom			2.854	0.661***	2.786	0.653***
Constant	96.492	5.882***	97.198	0.539***	96.206	0.523***
Adj. $R^2$	0.354		0.756		0.759	
	$F(6,91)$	5.76***	$F(15,82)$	60.13***	$F(16,81)$	67.58***
$N$	97		97		97	

Notes: \* Significant at 10%; \*\* Significant at 5%; \*\*\* Significant at 1%

To be fair, these effects are vulnerable to the selection of cases – as is not uncommon in small-*n* studies. It appears that, in particular, party unity is relatively low in Finland and New Zealand. Low party unity in Finland can be traced back to candidate selection rules and the electoral system. Finnish political parties' primary selection rules are required by law (Sundberg 1997: 97–117). In New Zealand, low unity is consistent with neither candidate selection nor the personal vote. This not easily explained – it could be of interest that the parliament studied is in fact the last under the first-past-the-post rules, before the introduction of mixed-member proportional representation. However, the electoral reform does not appear to have affected party unity in the following parliament (Barker and McLeay 2000: 139). On the other hand, party unity scores are relatively high in Denmark and Ireland – especially in light of the open candidate selection rules in the former and Single Transferable Vote electoral rules in the latter.

It is surprising that the inclusion of country dummies reduces the impact of the centralisation of candidate selection processes most – a variable that has performed most consistently so far. Yet incentives to seek out a personal vote continue to encourage MPs to defect from the party line, even if that personal vote is most vulnerable to the selection of cases. More importantly, opportunities to be promoted to a cabinet position that promises a tangible impact on policy consistently serve to hold members together. As a result, promotion opportunities are as crucial in understanding cross-national differences in party unity as they are in understanding rebels and loyalists in the British Parliament.

## **Conclusion**

Strong parties whose members vote collectively within the legislature have long been understood as a necessary element of parliamentary government. Previous attempts to account for variation in legislative party unity have focused on presidential versus parliamentary forms of government as being the main explanation for cross-national variation.

Our aim in this chapter has been to point to the fact that within parliamentary systems parties display variation in the level of legislative voting unity – something which cannot be accounted for by relying on the classification of presidential versus parliamentary systems. Beyond a mere acknowledgment of this fact, our aim has been to explain this variation in party unity within otherwise similar political systems.

Incentives to cultivate a personal vote encourage MPs to defect from the party line. Centralised selection rules, where the party leadership has greater control over the future of incumbents, appear to result in higher party voting unity – although this may be influenced by the particular selection of countries. The opportunity for promotion to government, and in particular, the opportunity to enter cabinet is a tempting offer to maintain unity. The evidence suggests that legislators in parliamentary systems are motivated by the desire to be promoted. This result might point to a significant difference between legislators in presidential systems and legislators in parliamentary systems of government and one that needs to be explored further at the theoretical and empirical level.

## Notes

- 1 As we are dealing exclusively with parliamentary regimes, we exclude from consideration the vote of confidence mechanism as an institutional explanation of party voting unity. We do agree that in comparing presidential and parliamentary regimes the vote of confidence is likely an important factor in explaining between-system variation in voting unity.
- 2 We ourselves collected data for Belgium, France and Ireland. Scores for United Kingdom were computed on the basis of data made available by Philip Norton (University of Hull). Data for Italy were made available by William Heller (Binghamton University). Data for Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Israel were gathered from Carey (2005). Data for Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden were taken from Jensen (2000), for Switzerland from Lanfranchi and Lüthi (1999), for Germany from Saalfeld (1995b) and for Austria from Müller *et al.* (2001).
- 3 In this respect it is odd, however, that what distinguishes Lundell's first category from the second is only the inclusiveness of the selectorate: the local party members rather than a restricted selection committee.
- 4 As Benedetto and Hix (2007) note, rebels are the rejected, the ejected and the dejected, a phrase evoking British Prime Minister Major's quip about the dispossessed and the never possessed.
- 5 In all cases this information was available on the website of national governments. This data was collected in January 2005 and is available from the authors on request. In calculating the number of ministerial offices we included only positions filled by members of the legislature.
- 6 To create this index, ballot, pool and votes are added together plus one. If the electoral system has a closed list and is not plurality, this number is divided by the natural log of the district magnitude. In all other cases, the log of district magnitude is added to the sum (Hallerberg and Marier 2004: 576–77).

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## Chapter One

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# Who Will Govern? Dilemmas of Coalition Government and Parliamentary Democracy

**T**his book addresses a theme of central importance to the theory and practice of parliamentary democracy in western Europe: multiparty coalition government. Coalition government is the subject of a voluminous literature within the political science discipline; however, the present study is unique in its systematic and comparative focus on coalition government in the richly diverse yet underresearched institutional setting of *subnational* (i.e., regional, provincial, local) representative assemblies. Across western Europe in the increasingly powerful institutions of subcentral governance, the politics of coalition has become a high-stakes affair with consequences exceeding the limited confines of individual localities. In the state parliaments of federal Germany, for example, Green parties have since the mid-1980s upset the country's once predictable balance of power. In countries as varied as France, Belgium, Italy, and Austria, nationalist forces of the extreme far Right have gained toeholds in their respective political systems by venturing into power-sharing coalitions with mainstream parties at regional, provincial, and municipal levels. Even in Britain, where the Labour and Conservative parties monopolize power at Westminster and Downing Street, Liberal Democrats have taken advantage of majority-less "hung" county and city councils to gain a share of governing responsibility. With the politicization and nationalization of subnational government in recent decades, alignments on the geographical chessboard of political power in most European democracies have become increasingly volatile and complex.

“Winner-take-all” majoritarian electoral systems at both national and subnational levels, such as those in the United States, tend to take much of the mystery out of the question “Who will govern?” Conversely, the proportional representation systems common throughout the continental European democracies normally produce election results in which no single party holds a majority of council seats. Thus, as in national parliamentary institutions in these countries, elections to federal state legislatures, regional parliaments, provincial assemblies, county boards, and municipal councils tend to produce strong incentives for political parties to build alliances in order to form a governing majority. This book is premised on the observation that in the formation of coalition governments we find the crystallization of many of the political processes fundamental to representative and parliamentary democracy: interpretation of electoral verdicts, postelection compromising of campaign pledges, trade-offs between policy and power, indirect selection of executive authority, temporary cooperation between long-term adversaries, collective decision making, and, with collective responsibility, a blurring of lines of accountability.

The *prima facie* importance of coalition formation is widely accepted in the context of national parliamentary institutions, but the subject is much less analyzed, much less compared, and therefore much less understood in the context of subnational assemblies. Seeking to remedy this deficiency, this book has three guiding objectives:

1. To depict the building of power-sharing coalitions in subnational parliaments as outward and well-defined manifestations of political motivation, governing intent, and democratic responsiveness
2. To assemble and analyze observations and statements of motivations and beliefs made by middle-level legislators—elected representatives whose obligations, experiences, and ambitions are for the most part overlooked by students of parliamentary government
3. To build upon existing theories of coalition politics to identify cross-national behavioral similarities and to highlight within-nation differences as they are revealed in actual high-stakes political situations

## Elections, Coalitions, and Representation

Two centuries ago, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract*, insisted that “the instant a people gives itself to representatives, it is no longer free” (103). For some, Rousseau’s radical critique of democratic representation may be a bit overstated. In today’s world, few would contend that perfect direct democracy is really possible on any useful scale; still, Rousseau effectively reminds us that the relationship between representatives and the represented is at best imperfect. One particular concern voiced by some observers of political systems characterized by coalition government is whether the quality of democratic representation and of the electoral mechanism itself is diminished when legislative parties—not voters—ultimately answer the question “Who will govern?”

Two decades ago, Abram De Swaan (1973) also wrote of representative democracy’s imperfections: “If different governments, varying in party membership and policy, may result from a given election outcome, either there is no ‘verdict of the electorate’ or . . . the verdict is not necessarily, or even usually realized in multi-party systems” (1–2). De Swaan at that moment put his finger on one of the supposed weaknesses of coalition systems, namely that they remove any direct linkage between votes and the formation of a government. According to basic tenets of liberal democratic theory, voters—not party leaders locked in secretive backroom negotiations—should determine the political complexion of a governing executive body. In political systems that encourage government by coalition, however, popular will is instrumental only in that it decides which political parties will sit in parliament. Once this initial matter is determined, deputies and party leaders are ultimately free to choose from among a potentially huge number of cross-party combinations and permutations in search of a winning majority. This process may produce “strange bedfellows,” governments that fail to resemble the messages sent by voters some days, weeks, or even months earlier. “Coalitions of minorities,” groups of small parties whose policy preferences may be starkly incompatible, can unite for the sole purpose of evicting a larger party from its hegemonic place in government. Similarly, “coalitions of losers,” parties and adversaries whose electoral scores have just dropped precipitously, can join forces to cling to power and forestall their mutual demise. The failure to come to any cross-party agreement may also produce “coalition avoidance” and thus minority governments, often weak and beholden throughout

their terms to transient legislative voting majorities or to the threat of blackmail from some external party. Indeed, it would seem that almost anything is possible in postelection coalition formation.

A growing number of rigorous studies of government formation now suggest that, in reality, the realm of possible cross-party coalitions is systematically and significantly constricted by the rules, structures, and norms of the parliamentary institutions to which parties gain access (Bergman 1995; Laver and Schofield 1990; Strom 1994; Strom, Budge, and Laver 1994). These attempts at reconciling a neoinstitutionalist approach with that of formal rational choice theory have clearly enhanced the already rich literature on cabinet coalitions in European national governments (see Bogdanor 1983; Browne and Dreijmanis 1982; Dodd 1976; Luebbert 1986; Pridham 1986). Still, efforts to understand coalition behavior in a “constrained real world” (Laver and Schofield 1990, 195) remain deficient in at least two respects, the first of which is their general failure to consider broader issues of democratic representation. Indeed, inseparable from our desire to better explain and anticipate the political composition of coalition governments should be the goal of evaluating the dynamics of coalition formation within the larger democratic process. Political science can, for example, evaluate popular claims that political parties purposefully manipulate the coalition process in order to circumvent electoral verdicts. We can look further to determine if, as is often charged, the secretive postelection bargaining and deal making characteristic of government formation undercut the electoral process, thus weakening a supposedly fundamental link between citizens and their representatives. These concerns help stimulate thought on coalition formation not only as a curious behavioral puzzle but also as an ambiguous mechanism in the machinery of parliamentary democracy.

Existing efforts also remain deficient by failing to exploit alternative data sources outside the national parliamentary arena. Scrutiny of coalition politics in subnational institutions of representative governance is especially overdue; the topic has been described as “an almost entirely unworked field in political science” (Mellors 1989, 8) and a “largely forgotten area” (Pridham 1987, 374). At subnational levels, processes of institutional and political decentralization during the past two decades have created new political expectations and new political opportunities. In some countries (e.g., France, Belgium, Italy, Spain), decentralization has created entirely new institutions of representative government, directly elected councils and parliaments located at an

intermediate, or “meso,” position between national and local governments. In other countries (e.g., Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway), decentralization has empowered existing institutions with new fiscal and deliberative responsibilities. In all countries, a common justification for breathing new life into subnational institutions has been that they bring government closer to the people, increase the opportunities for citizen participation, decentralize economic decision making, and, in short, increase the state’s “democraticness” (Putnam 1993; Schmidt 1990; Sharpe 1993). Thus we have one of our first puzzles to solve: How does the “decentralization as democratization” ideal square with observations indicating that in many instances local electoral competition, local public opinion, and local policy issues are not the driving forces behind party strategy and key decisions, such as government formation, at subnational levels? As an artificial act, and as the immediate act following an election, the process of manufacturing a governing majority is one area in which parties’ choices can be evaluated in light of their professed intentions to enhance transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in decision making.

Designed to contribute to serious thinking along these lines, this book raises three essential sets of questions:

1. If different local and regional governments, varying in party membership and policy, may result from a given election outcome, then is the process that yields such “strange bedfellows” genuinely responsive to the preferences of the electorate? In other words, *do electoral competition and electoral verdicts really matter in coalition systems?*
2. Do politicians elected to subnational parliaments follow the strategic instructions of central party leaders, or do regional and local parties have a free hand in their coalition decisions? In short, when national/subnational divisions over strategy arise, *are local and regional politicians loyal to their national leaders or their local constituents?*
3. In demonstrating the (in)compatibility of parties, their (in)efficacy in governing, and the electoral (un)popularity of a partnership, do coalitions in regional and local parliaments supply part of the “perfect information” that national party leaders need when they sit down at the bargaining table to negotiate a new national government? In what sense *are subnational parliaments “proving grounds” for future national coalition governments?*

Answers to these questions can help explain one of the most important recurrent events in parliamentary democracy. Moreover, they allow deeper understandings of the meanings of *representation*, *power*, and *cooperation* outside the more familiar institutional arena of national parliamentary politics.

### **Coalition Politics in the Real World of Subnational Assemblies**

To get a flavor for the politics of coalition as it plays out in subnational institutions, we can point to a mix of examples. When, for instance, a party holding just 8 seats in a parliament of 113 members in France's third-largest region emerges from postelection coalition bargaining in sole possession of the regional presidency, in control of the regional cabinet, and in command of a Fr 3.9-million regional budget, the process by which relative electoral weakness transforms itself into substantial governmental power becomes central to the concerns of political science.<sup>1</sup> When a party gains the plurality of votes and seats in five consecutive elections in Belgium's largest province and is on five consecutive occasions excluded and denied any share of provincial power, then the process by which relative electoral strength transforms itself into complete governmental weakness is again clearly important.<sup>2</sup> And when a radical right-wing party led by an unrepentant veteran of the Waffen SS for the first time enters the parliament of one of Germany's wealthiest Länder with 11% of the vote, forces the election's two big losers—the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD)—into a rare “Grand Coalition,” and thus leaves the Landtag with virtually no democratic opposition, then the ability of representative government to function effectively under such circumstances must certainly be examined.<sup>3</sup> In short, many substantively important political outcomes stand to influence large numbers of people but are generally overlooked in the literatures on coalition government and parliamentary democracy.

Journalistic treatment of these outcomes is extensive. There is, moreover, a small but growing body of literature that addresses individual cases and single countries. Good work has been done, for example, on the Dutch municipal councils (Denters 1985, 1993; Kuiper and Tops 1989; Steunenberg 1992), on the Danish municipal councils (Pedersen and Elklit 1995; Thomas 1989), on the Belgian municipal

and provincial councils (Mabille 1982, 1986; Pijnenburg 1987, 1988, 1989), on the Italian municipal and regional councils (Pridham 1984, 1986; Zariski 1984), on Germany's Land legislatures (Gunlicks 1977; Roberts 1989), on the so-called hung county and regional councils in Britain (Laver, Rallings, and Thrasher 1987; Mellors 1983, 1984, 1989; Temple 1991), on the regional assemblies in post-Franco Spain (Botella 1989; Robinson 1989), and on France's new regional councils (Hainsworth and Loughlin 1989; Mazey 1986; Perrineau 1987; Schmidt 1990). What these works lack, unfortunately, is genuine comparison. Little effort has been made to understand varying political responses to power-sharing opportunities at subnational levels across these various countries. Comparison, then, is one area to which the present study seeks to contribute.

What existing works do tell us very clearly is that coalition outcomes are valued by political parties and by voters. This, they conclude, is axiomatic. Government status is critical in subnational assemblies, and competition for government status is a struggle for resources—both political and economic. Provincial and regional governments oversee budgets that in past decades have generally grown at rates faster than those in local or national government. The overloaded, overburdened modern welfare state has “off-loaded” many of its traditional tasks to the subcentral units (Batley and Stoker 1991; Jones and Keating 1995; Sharpe 1993). Provincial and regional executives not only are charged with managing grants and fiscal transfers from the state and from the European Union but also have authority and responsibility in such areas as investment, regional development, transportation, infrastructure, education, professional training, social services, environmental management, supervision over local governments, and, of course, taxation.

Beyond service delivery, part of “responsible” democratic governance is responsive and representative institutions of subnational governance. Subnational institutions can fulfill purposeful obligations. If subnational governance “matters,” as a survey of its functional importance would indicate, then the partisan composition of the governing executives themselves should also matter in a practical sense. Research indicates that subnational assemblies are increasingly the domain of disciplined political party groups and not simply of individuals only titularly attached to national party organizations (Dunleavy 1980; Mellors and Pijnenburg 1989; Selle and Svåsand 1983). Despite morose academic predictions of the “end of ideology” and the “decline of

party,” we may still assume that the policies of a single-party Socialist regional government will differ predictably from those of a single-party Christian Democratic or Liberal regional government. Indeed, there is evidence to support the general proposition that, all else being equal, Left-controlled regions have tended to tax, spend, and borrow more heavily than Right-controlled regional authorities (Denters 1993; Mazey 1993; Page and Goldsmith 1987). To cite just one example, in the so-called red Hainaut province in Belgium—“red” because it is the bastion of the Socialist Party—taxes and spending per capita are three times those of neighboring East Flanders, which has had a conservative provincial majority for two uninterrupted decades (Bernard 1992; Hugé 1989, 1991).

We must wonder, however, how well a multiparty coalition government will perform, especially if it is the product of untried alliances, such as those between Socialists and Liberals, traditional parties and ecologists, or centrist parties and extremists. What are the effects of coalition on subnational budgets, taxes, services, or the distribution of central government outlays? Does coalition encourage perpetual legislative “gridlock,” or can multiparty power sharing in subnational assemblies cultivate pragmatism and cooperation? Clearly, each coalition outcome in a local or provincial parliament is a story in itself. Each coalition has policy implications, both in terms of substance and in terms of intergovernmental coherence. Each coalition says something about the degree to which competitors and even avowed adversaries can cooperate in democratic systems. Each coalition provides important indications as to the locus of power and influence in political parties and in representative assemblies. These are nontrivial concerns; a nonsuperficial understanding of modern parliamentary governance, therefore, requires that they be addressed.

### **Theoretical Justification**

The study of subnational coalition formation provides the opportunity to collect empirical observations concerning behavioral outcomes and to test alternative causal hypotheses against them. For example, one set of outcomes that raises a host of theoretical questions concerns those multiparty governing arrangements that deviate from the more familiar patterns established in national parliamentary politics. In fact, our study could begin by making a single observation: in most multi-

party systems with directly elected territorial assemblies, power-sharing alliances at national and subnational levels of government rarely match. Despite the numerical possibility of faithfully mirroring the national government-versus-opposition pattern, regional and provincial coalitions are frequently “incongruent,” with party allies at one level of government facing off as opponents at the next.

The phenomenon prevails throughout the European democracies. The Free Democrats in Germany, for example, participate in regional-level governments with Social Democrats while playing partner to the Christian Union parties in Bonn. The conservative parties in France collude with the extremist Front National in the regions while boasting a clear and safe distance from the “*lépénistes*” in Paris. Socialists and Liberals in Belgium defy traditional ideological divisions to form joint regional, provincial, and municipal governments while refusing cooperation at the national level. Italian Socialists and Social Democrats have shared power with the Communists in regional administrations without any similar arrangements evolving in Rome. Even county branches of the Conservative and Labour parties in Britain have established *de facto* governing coalitions, although this has been unthinkable in national government.

The puzzle of two levels of the same political party belonging to different coalition camps raises an array of questions: Are the incentives and constraints that compel political parties to ally with one another in territorial parliaments the same as those that guide parliamentary parties at the national level? For any given party, where are the fundamental decisions about participation in subnational coalitions made—at the subnational or the national level? On what bases are these decisions made? How much influence is brought to bear on subnational party groups by the national party leadership, and vice versa? Are governing coalitions at subnational levels more or less responsive to the will of the electorate than those at the national level? Finally, to what extent do political parties use subnational assemblies either as experimental laboratories for future national coalitions or as outlets for diffusing internal party dissent?

Turning to what is a rich theoretical literature on coalitions and government formation for answers to these questions proves somewhat less than satisfactory. Many extant theories are “policy blind.” Most insist that researchers consider political parties to be *a priori* “unitary actors” or “single-minded bargaining entities.” All but a few view government formation as anything but a single-shot “game”—a static, dis-

crete contest that neither is influenced by nor is itself influencing coalitions being formed at a different time or at different locations in the political system. No theories address the linkages between party alliances in national government and those developing in subnational government. None address the direction of coalition change within the system. There is little theoretical provision, moreover, for the provincial or regional party group whose coalition preference comes into conflict with that of its national leadership, for the pressures of maintaining national-subnational congruence, or for the possibility of local experimentation in alternative alliances for possible future use in national government. Previous efforts have all generally focused on motivation or ideological compatibility as *the* causal agents. Few, if any, have suggested that situation or context may systematically condition what rational actors may be expected to do in coalition situations. In short, the existing literature is rather ill equipped to deal with the questions that emerge once the analysis of coalition government expands to include regional and local representative institutions.

Any theoretical approach that intends to have broad, comparative applicability must start, if not from scratch, then at least at the level of eclectically borrowing the least objectionable tenets from the existing literature on coalitions, parties, and democratic representation. The fundamental task, taken up in subsequent chapters, is not to concoct a model purporting an exact “fit” but to construct some meaningful alternative hypotheses and to test for linkages among significant variables. We need, in short, to develop a lens through which to view and compare coalition behavior across subnational assemblies. Such a lens should allow us to arrive at useful comparative generalizations and at the same time allow us to be sensitive to some of the peculiar qualities of individual regions, provinces, and parties.

### **Structure of the Book**

This introduction has argued the merits of investigating dilemmas of coalition politics in subnational parliamentary assemblies, in particular the well-defined and regularly repeated political act of government formation. The analysis endeavors to compare the process, its outcomes, and its broader implications for democratic representation.

Our comparison focuses on western Europe and specifically on three countries: France, Belgium, and Germany. There are compelling

reasons for considering these three countries as worthy arenas for intrasystem and cross-national comparison. The countries are different as are the electoral cleavages that separate their parties. Yet in each country, recent and major alterations in basic territorial and institutional structures have called new attention to fundamental political processes and performance at regional and local levels. Subnational governance in each of the three countries runs the full range of possibilities: single-party majorities, single-party minorities, multiparty coalition majorities, multiparty coalition minorities. Power-sharing coalitions also demonstrate a variety of characteristics: oversized coalitions, ideologically “unconnected” coalitions, coalitions of “losers,” and coalitions excluding the party with the plurality of seats. In each country, moreover, parties frequently appear to reject the national coalition of the day in favor of some alternative regional or provincial arrangement, even when election results would allow for a duplication. Similarly positioned parties in different regions, when faced with similar coalition opportunities, are known to choose different strategies. Variation, of both the within-nation and the cross-national kind, begs for explanation.

In search of explanation, ensuing chapters explore evidence from a mix of sources. Evidence comes first from historical events data: more than 260 government formations in the Belgian *conseils provinciaux* and *conseils régionaux/gewestraad*, the French *conseils régionaux*, and the German *Länderparlamenten* since the early 1960s. To these historical data are added cross-sectional survey data, collected from 608 elected representatives in the three countries in 1992. These sources are then supplemented by material from 107 interviews conducted with deputies, councilors, and party officials during the September 1992–September 1993 period. Such evidence should not only add depth to our existing knowledge of coalition politics in Belgium, France, and Germany but also demonstrate how coalition arrangements in subnational assemblies can sustain or complicate the coalition environment within any multiparty democratic system.

The book has four parts with nine chapters. In part 1, following this introduction, chapter 2 provides a formal discussion of the relevant literature and its application to our particular research questions. In doing so, it summarizes the conventional wisdom on coalitions, outlines the many and varied criticisms of formal theory, and surveys recent attempts to use subnational coalitions as alternative data sources. In this way, we can assess the utility of importing concepts and as-

sumptions from the existing literature for purposes of describing and explaining the payoffs of government status in Europe's subnational assemblies. Identifying the stakes for politicians also allows us to identify the key issues for comparative analysis and to evaluate the status of our current theoretical understanding of those issues.

Part 2 presents theory and methods. Chapter 3 takes a fresh and ambitious look at coalition theory from the perspective of subnational institutions. In developing a general theory of coalition formation for the subnational governmental arena, the chapter constructs testable hypotheses regarding system-level, group-level, and individual-level influences on strategic choice. Chapter 4 provides an explanation of the techniques used to collect and analyze the various kinds of data assembled for the book. This chapter delineates a three-pronged research methodology and defends the logic of the selection of cases for analysis. The tools of investigation, including events data analysis, attitudinal survey administration, and elite interviewing, are elaborated and justified.

Part 3 commences the empirical analysis in earnest, with chapter 5 narrowing the discussion by focusing on coalition politics in three particular (and in some ways peculiar) European nation-states. The German (federal), French (unitary/regionalizing), and Belgian (regionalized/federalizing) systems are detailed, including comparisons of key parties, institutional "rules of the game," and historical patterns of coalition behavior. Comparisons reveal that, unlike the behavior posited by existing theory and anticipated by our understanding of national-level politics, coalition behavior in peripheral legislatures does not necessarily reflect electoral verdicts, obligatory duplications of national arrangements, or strict adherence to zero-sum competition.

Chapter 6 asks, "Do electoral competition and electoral verdicts matter in strategic approaches to power sharing at subnational levels?" Ideally, the act of majority formation in territorial parliaments should serve to determine and legitimize the direction of public policy in the province, region, or state. But when election results are not the most important influence in the choice of government, the veracity of this legitimizing function becomes suspect. In such cases, a fundamental principle of representative democracy—that the government, at whatever level of the polity, should enjoy the support of the electorate—seems lost. Combining aggregate-level and individual-level data, the analysis compares the relative influences of electoral competition, electoral accountability, and electoral change on coalition outcomes.

Chapter 7 suggests that in a perfect democratic world where party competition and cooperation in regional institutions reflected and reacted to the opinions and wishes of regional electorates, we would expect regional party groups to enjoy decision-making autonomy in their own parliamentary affairs. In the imperfect democratic systems of the real world, however, political decisions that hold weighty consequences for local voters may become “nested” in the larger, national coalition game and thus subject to the direction of central party leaders and other organizational actors external to the region or province. The effort to identify the personal motivations and internal party pressures that influence coalition behavior in the subnational arena is taken up in this chapter. Attitudinal data are tested for disparities between subnational councilors and national party leadership. These data suggest the conditions under which councilors at subnational levels submit to national party leadership and those under which there is more likely to be attitude-related conflict over strategic choices.

Part 4 provides applications of the theoretical points made in preceding chapters and presents the principal conclusions drawn from the study. Chapter 8 broaches the important and timely subject of bottom-up coalition influence and change. Here the task is to demonstrate linkage between coalition systems at the national and subnational levels of government. Can coalitions formed in territorial assemblies restrict or enlarge the universe of coalitions available to the same set of parties in a national parliament? Which subnational coalitions are consciously deemed “proving grounds” for future national governments? Comparison of individual cases from Belgium, Germany, and France, reporting firsthand accounts of postelection coalition formations, allows some substantively interesting political stories to be told that otherwise would be left out of accounts of multiparty government in the three countries.

In chapter 9 the discussion returns to the purposes, practices, and potential of the subnational parliamentary institutions introduced in chapter 1. In turning away from the particular German, French, and Belgian cases, this final chapter synthesizes the results garnered from the empirical investigation and suggests the primary conclusions and contributions of the analysis. Thus, the book concludes with an agenda for future research in the fields of subnational parliamentary institutions, political parties, and coalition government.

## 4. Minority governments in office

The previous chapter identified the conditions under which minority governments are most likely to form. In this chapter, we shall take a closer look at the performance of minority (and other) governments once they are in office. Two puzzles will be at the center of our attention: (1) How do minority governments manage to build legislative majorities for their policy programs, and (2) how well do they do in office compared to alternative cabinet types? Thus, the first question will ask *how* minority cabinets perform, the second *how well*.

There are somewhat different reasons why we should be interested in these two issues. The first question, how minority cabinets manage to build legislative majorities, is simply a puzzle that cabinet studies have not adequately solved. The second query, concerning minority cabinet performance in office, has been answered more often, but not much better. Chapter 1 presented an overview of this literature on minority government performance. Minority cabinets, we have learned, are commonly portrayed as lacking viability as well as effectiveness compared to majority governments. The mere absence of a government majority is in itself commonly taken as an indication of cabinet ineffectiveness.

But my objective here is not simply to contest the conventional wisdom, or even to add to our knowledge of minority cabinets. The theoretical explanation of minority cabinet formation I have developed in the preceding chapters ultimately rests on a number of assumptions concerning cabinet performance. I have argued that political parties under certain conditions tend to prefer to participate in a majority coalition either (1) being in office alone (or with a small number of partners) in a minority government, or (2) opposition. In either case, and particularly for parties opting for op-

position, expectations of future electoral advantage must be a powerful motivation. For parties choosing to form a government alone, their monopoly on office benefits may also help offset the anticipated policy compromises caused by their lack of a legislative majority.

### Minority governments and majority building

For participants in minority governments, the problem of constructing legislative majorities begins long before the government actually takes office. Expectations of how this legislative support could come about have presumably entered into the calculations of all the parties faced with the choice between participation in this form of government and one with majority support. This is not to say that the information upon which parties make such decisions is good. There may in fact be a great deal of uncertainty concerning the legislative course of a prospective minority cabinet.

#### *Formal minority governments*

In some cases, however, this uncertainty is virtually nil. Or rather, the government's legislative support is just as firmly committed as if it had been a majority government. Of course I am speaking here of *formal* minority governments. Recall that externally supported governments are administrations whose legislative support is negotiated prior to government formation through explicit, comprehensive, and more than short-term contracts. Some externally supported cabinets are formal minority governments. Such cabinets control less than a majority of all legislative seats unless their support parties are counted, but have parliamentary majorities when the latter are included. If such cabinets were the predominant type of minority cabinet, our inquiry into the legislative majority building could stop right here. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, however, formal minority governments are *not* a very large proportion of all minority governments.

Let us begin our discussion of majority-building strategies by considering the incidence of formal minority governments in some-

Table 4.1. *Varieties of external support*

Country	External support		Formal minority cabinets	
	Number	Percentage of all governments	Number	Percentage of all minority cabinets
Belgium	0	0	0	0
Canada	0	0	0	0
Denmark	4	16	2	9
Finland	3	9	3	27
France	5	17	2	17
Iceland	0	0	0	0
Ireland	1	6	0	0
Israel	11	38	3	100
Italy	12	25	4	20
Netherlands	1	5	0	0
Norway	0	0	0	0
Portugal	0	0	0	0
Spain	0	0	0	0
Sweden	0	0	0	0
United Kingdom	0	0	0	0
Total	37	11	14	11

what greater detail. Recall that the number of support agreements may exceed the number of formal minority cabinets for two different reasons: First, each government may have support agreements with more than one party, and second, some minority governments may remain undersized (and hence substantive) even after their support parties have been counted. Table 4.1 breaks external support agreements and formal minority cabinets down by country. The first column simply counts the number of governments *with at least one support agreement*.<sup>1</sup> Note that although a total of 37 governments have some form of external support, only 14 are formal minority cabinets.

Coincidentally, the ratio of formal minority cabinets to all undersized governments is precisely the same as that of externally supported governments to all governments (one in nine). Thus external support is no more common in situations where it would give the govern-

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Table 4.1 does not tell us the total number of support agreements in each case of external support. Such a report would, however, be of modest theoretical interest.

ment a majority than otherwise. Or, in other words, pivotal parties are no more likely to enter formal support agreements than any others. This is a surprising result, since one might assume that in the market for support agreements pivotal parties would be in special demand. Perhaps pivotal parties fully exploit that bargaining advantage. Alternatively, we may overestimate the disadvantages of operating without a prenegotiated legislative coalition.

This brief survey of external support agreements clearly demonstrates that they are much more common in some polities than in others. Israel and Italy collectively account for half of all formal minority governments and over 60% of all externally supported cabinets. All 3 minority cabinets in Israel have relied on external support, as have eight other governments with majority support to begin with.<sup>2</sup> Italy has seen 12 externally supported governments, 4 of which have been formal minority cabinets. On the other hand, 8 of 15 democracies have never experienced a single case of external support, and the 14 formal minority cabinets are distributed among no more than five different political systems.

Clearly, support agreements are not randomly distributed across countries. Besides Israel and Italy, only Denmark, Finland, and France (Fourth Republic) have any record of formal minority governments. Only polities with some frequency of support agreements have also experienced formal minority cabinets. On the other hand, it is *not* generally the case that political systems with a high number of *substantive* minority governments also account for a large number of *formal* ones. No formal minority governments have formed in Canada or Ireland, which collectively have produced 15 substantive minority cabinets. And of 46 minority governments in the three Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden), only 2 (both Danish) have been formal.

Formal support agreements cannot be explained in isolation from alternative legislative strategies. Before we can explain the frequency of support agreements in Israel and Italy, or their absence in Scandinavia and the Anglo-American world, we therefore need to consider the choice of legislative strategy more broadly.

<sup>2</sup> Many of these Israeli cases of external support to majority coalitions are accounted for by the Paoli Agudat Israel, a party that particularly in the 1960s frequently found cabinet participation incompatible with its religious commitments.

## Strategies of majority building

Formal minority governments are the tip of the iceberg. They illustrate how a small proportion of undersized governments solve the problem of building legislative majorities. And they suggest that related to them is a vast array of other majority-building strategies that are less visible to the casual observer. These strategies can be ordered along two dimensions: (1) the consistency of the membership of the government's legislative coalition, and (2) the policy content of government concessions to support parties. We shall discuss these dimensions successively and then look at some actual practices in different countries.

### *Membership consistency*

Recall that I made three definitional requirements of external support agreements. Such "contracts" had to be (1) formalized (explicit), (2) comprehensive in policy terms, and (3) more than short-term in duration. In addressing majority-building strategies in general, we can consider these three requirements to represent an extreme degree of *membership consistency*. Governments with external support agreements have legislative coalitions consisting of the same parties across policy dimensions and over time. However, minority governments can seek legislative coalitions that are much less consistent in membership. That is to say, legislative support agreements may cover a narrower range of issues, a shorter time frame, and/or be less binding than what we require of external support agreements that qualify for formal minority status.

At the opposite extreme from formal minority governments would be administrations content (or forced) to build their legislative majorities from issue to issue with whatever party would demand the fewest concessions. I shall refer to such practices as *ad hoc* coalitions or *shifting majorities*. While such a strategy leaves the government with maximum flexibility to exploit favorable issue opportunities, it also renders it maximally susceptible to defeat. Between this extreme and that of formal minority governments, there is a wide variety of "bundling" strategies open to minority cabinets. Thus, undersized governments could cement support from a specific

set of parties in a narrow issue area for a long period of time, or on a broad range of issues for a short period of time. Either sort of agreement could be highly formalized and public, or implicit and secret.

Minority governments thus face choices along different dimensions of aggregation. However, these choices are not mutually independent. Such governments may, for example, find it difficult to form long-term membership-consistent legislative coalitions that are *not* formalized. Yet there is considerable variation in the legislative majority-building strategies that have actually been pursued by different minority cabinets. Some of this variation may occur between different governments in the same political system. However, a large part of these differences is driven by variation in the institutional environment and therefore varies more *between* countries than *within* them. We shall discuss examples from three different polities a little later.

#### *General policy content of government concessions*

In building legislative coalitions at whatever level of aggregation, minority governments have to be willing to offer concessions to the parties they court. Such concessions may take a variety of forms, depending on what the government has to offer and what the support parties want. By definition, cabinet portfolios are not one of the government's concessions in cases of substantive minority governments. However, the government may seek to secure legislative support by offering subcabinet offices in any number of government agencies and enterprises.

Alternatively, the governing parties may hold out offers of policy concessions. Such concessions may involve compromises on the issues under consideration, but it is also entirely possible for governments and support parties to engage in logrolling, whereby the government buys legislative support on one issue for concessions in a totally different issue area. A party representing a linguistic minority may, for example, be brought to support the government's foreign policy position in exchange for concessions on education policy. A further possibility is for the government to offer narrow and particularistic policy concessions in exchange for support on much broader issues.

Such particularistic concessions may, for example, target specific local or demographic clienteles of support parties.

We shall distinguish different majority-building strategies according to their *general policy content*. The more minority governments (or proto-coalitions behaving as prospective minority cabinets) compromise on the major policy decisions facing the legislature (whether issue-to-issue or by logrolling), the higher the general policy content of their concessions. At the low end of this dimension, then, we find governments that rely on subcabinet offices and/or particularistic policy concessions (e.g., constituency services) for their legislative majorities.

By assumption minority governments minimize the office and policy concessions they make in order to gain the requisite legislative support. However, they may face difficult choices in determining which mix of policy and office benefits to offer. As I shall argue, their decision as to this trade-off will reflect both supply and demand conditions. For now, let us simply think of these choices as located along a continuum of general policy content.

#### Cross-national variations in majority building

Let us consider some cases of typical patterns of majority building in different political systems. Before any attempt can be made to explain these differences, I shall describe them and point out some representative cases. Figure 4.1 illustrates the two main strategy dimensions just described: coalition membership consistency and the general policy content of government concessions.

Figure 4.1 also contains the names of five polities that exemplify different types of majority-building strategies: Israel for high levels of both issue aggregation and policy content, Italy for similarly high aggregation but somewhat lower policy content, Denmark for high policy content but intermediate levels of aggregation, Norway for high policy content and low aggregation, and finally Ireland for low policy content and moderate aggregation. Since it is next to impossible to "measure" these variables, these various characterizations are meant only to be approximate and comparative. Although cases differ more cross-nationally than intertemporally, we also have to recognize

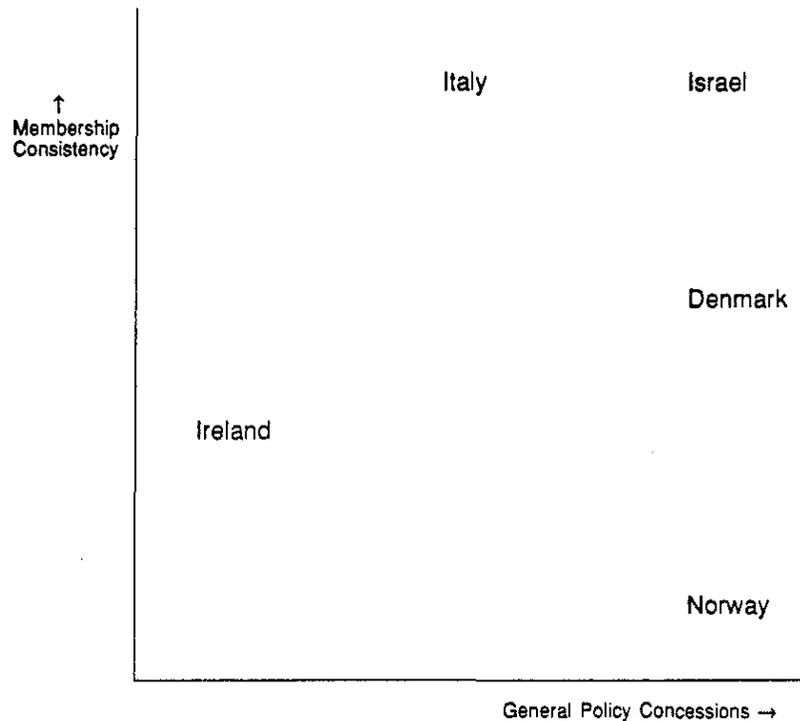


Figure 4.1. Coalition-building strategies with illustrative cases.

some variation from government to government in each country. I shall flesh out an example of majority building in each case to deepen our understanding of the variety of strategies for the formation of legislative coalitions. However, since Italy and Norway are discussed in separate chapters in this book, only Israel, Denmark, and Ireland will be discussed here.

*Israel: consistent memberships and policy concessions*

Since its founding in 1949, Israel has hardly been typified by minority governments. Only 3 of 29 governments over these four decades have been undersized, and all of these have in fact been formal minority cabinets. Moreover, oversized coalitions are more characteristic of

Israel than of any other country in this study. Mean parliamentary basis is 63.5%, higher than that of any other country. No fewer than 9 governments have had a parliamentary basis exceeding 70%, not counting external support. Thus Israel accounts for about one-fifth of all governments with such broad support.

As mentioned, the three Israeli minority governments (Begin I, Begin III, and Shamir I) have all been externally supported, and all have held close to a majority of the seats in the 120-member Knesset even without this support. Let us look at Begin III (1981–3), the longest-lived of these three cabinets, as an example of majority building in the Israeli context.

Menachem Begin was the incumbent prime minister as the Israelis went to the polls in 1981. In the election, Begin's Likud front eked out a narrow one-seat plurality over its main competitor, the Labor Alignment. Although both Likud and Labor claimed electoral victory, on July 15 President Navon formally entrusted Begin with the task of forming a new government. Three weeks later Begin succeeded in concluding an agreement with the National Religious party and Tami, both of which joined his coalition government. The coalition agreement also included the ultra-orthodox Agudat Israel, which, however, received no representation in the cabinet. The parties in Begin III collectively controlled 57 of the 120 seats in the Knesset, or 61 if Agudat Israel's external support is included. The new cabinet was thus a formal minority government.

The nature of the coalition agreement between the Agudat Israel and the other ruling parties illustrates the comprehensiveness and formalization of such legislative coalitions in Israel. The four parties issued a joint policy declaration containing a total of 83 clauses. The first of these confirmed the continuing validity of the policy program of the previous government, which had largely consisted of the same parties. Of the remaining clauses, more than half pertained to various religious practices and observances, mostly reflecting the concerns of the Agudat Israel. Among these issues were more liberal military service exemptions for *yeshiva* (seminary) students and tighter restrictions on the sale of pork in Jewish-populated areas. They were referred to by the Labor opposition as a "new peak of religious coercion."

Thus, the new government came to power on the basis of a very

detailed and comprehensive policy program, and the Agudat Israel was an integral part of the legislative coalition behind this program. The party's decision not to accept any ministerial portfolios was religiously based and signified no lack of commitment to the government's policies. This commitment persisted throughout the 25 months Begin III remained in power. The precarious nature of Begin's legislative majority nonetheless caused the government some narrow escapes, especially after two Likud deputies defected to the opposition in May 1982. Two months later, however, the right-wing Tehiya party, which had three deputies, voted to join the ruling coalition (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, pp. 31120, 32159-60).

The Israeli proclivity toward membership-consistent and formalized legislative coalitions is at least partly due to some of its constitutional features. The constitution (the Basic Law of Government of 1968) requires that incoming governments present a program and receive an investiture vote in the Knesset (Seliktar, 1982). Governments that lose votes of confidence are also required to step down (Laver and Schofield, in press), and parliamentary defeats by the government are considered serious. These are obstacles to a more ad hoc majority-building practice.

Policy negotiations also get interwoven with the intense bargaining over portfolios that characterizes Israeli cabinet crises. The constitution limits the negotiation process to four months, and many Israeli cabinet crises have in fact been protracted. These detailed bargains are in part due to the great constitutional power of the prime minister to reshuffle personnel and to shift jurisdiction within the government (Seliktar, 1982). Parties not receiving the prime ministership therefore seek to extract very specific concessions and guarantees from the party so favored. The existence of religious parties with intense policy preferences and low interest in spoils makes it possible for the larger parties to purchase legislative support at a low cost in office benefits. The existence of these parties with a low demand for office facilitates the Israeli pattern of highly aggregated agreements with minimal office concessions.

*Ireland: modest consistency and particularistic concessions*

The Irish Republic has a governmental record very different from that of Israel. No postwar Irish government has ever been oversized,

and the largest share of legislative seats held by the government is 57%. Of 17 postwar governments, 7 have been undersized. Like several other countries with high frequencies of minority cabinets, Ireland is basically an imperfect two-bloc system. Since the 1950s, single-party governments of the Fianna Fáil have alternated with coalitions of the two other major parties, the Fine Gael and the Irish Labour party. Fianna Fáil has historically found it difficult to gain an outright majority in the Dáil, and five of Ireland's seven minority governments have been single-party administrations of the Fianna Fáil.

Contrary to most other Western European polities, Ireland has retained a small number of independent members of the Dáil. To a large extent the survival of these independents is a function of the Irish single transferable vote (STV) electoral system, which has reinforced the localism of Irish party politics (Carty, 1981; but see also Mair, 1987). Traditionally, independent deputies were often non-partisan local patrons or notables, but in recent years a larger proportion have been defectors from one of the major parties. In the postwar period the number of independents elected has varied from 1 in 1969 to 14 in 1951. Independents have frequently collectively been pivotal when minority governments have been in office, and it is with these TDs (*Teachta Dála*, members of Parliament) that governments have preferred to negotiate.

Ireland offers a clear contrast to Israel in the majority-building strategies most commonly employed by minority governments. Support agreements have rarely been publicized, and legislative coalitions have tended not to be very consistent in membership. Irish governing parties have been much more content to seek particularistic alliances and ad hoc support. Concessions offered to supporters have typically been in the form of policy of purely local interest.

This pattern was evident in the first two postwar Fianna Fáil minority cabinets, de Valera II (1951-4) and Lemass II (1961-5). Lemass was elected Taoiseach (prime minister) with the support of two independents (TDs Carroll and Sherwin), and there were unsubstantiated rumors that the support of these independents had been secured by promises of political favors (Farrell, 1987: 140).<sup>3</sup> Farrell goes on to make this description of the support relationship:

<sup>3</sup> Farrell (1987) places little trust in these rumors, arguing that the fear of an early dissolution sufficed to keep the independents voting for the government.

Certainly, independent deputies supporting this latter government [Lemass II] had considerable ease of access to ministers and, it can be assumed, had a more privileged status than party backbenchers. While these independents benefited in terms of ensuring enhanced capacity to satisfy their own constituents, there is no evidence to suggest that they had any influence either on the general direction of government policy or on the control of parliamentary dissolution. (1987: 140)

The cost of legislative support went up in the early 1980s when two consecutive elections within a year failed to produce decisive results – a situation in which either Fianna Fáil or the coalition of Fine Gael and Labour had a majority. In 1981 a minority coalition of the latter two parties under Garret Fitzgerald came to power with the critical support of one of six independent deputies, Jim Kemmy. Fitzgerald apparently tried to build ad hoc majorities without any concessions of either office benefits or policy. Kemmy attempted to negotiate budgetary policy concessions in the areas of taxation, welfare services, and consumer subsidies. When these appeals to the government were unsuccessful, he voted against its budget and helped to bring it down.

The elections that followed produced a minor swing toward the Fianna Fáil, which nevertheless managed to win only 81 of the 166 seats in the Dáil. Three Sinn Féin and four independent deputies were elected. As the Sinn Féin deputies refused to commit themselves to any government, the Fianna Fáil leader, Charles Haughey, had to seek the support of at least two independents. In the end Haughey was elected Taoiseach with the support of independents Neil Blaney (Independent Fianna Fáil) and Tony Gregory, a former member of Sinn Féin. Gregory's support was particularly costly. In a written agreement, which was subsequently published by Gregory, Haughey had to agree to new welfare and nationalization schemes, plus a variety of pork barrel projects for Gregory's Dublin constituency. Despite these concessions, Gregory refused to recognize any binding commitment to the government, which was defeated after only eight months in office on a vote of confidence, in which Gregory abstained and Sinn Féin voted against (Farrell, 1987; *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, pp. 31042–3, 31445–8, 32022).

Even in the Gregory case the government's concessions had a large

particularistic (pork barrel) content, and the agreement failed to cement a legislative coalition over very many issues. In other cases, the Irish proclivity toward office benefit concessions and disaggregated legislative coalition building has been even more obvious. There are several institutional reasons for this tendency. The Irish constitution requires the Taoiseach to be elected by the Dáil, but not on the basis of any specific legislative program. This practice, which contrasts with, among others, Israel and Italy, clearly facilitates ad hoc legislative coalition building.

The demands of the potentially pivotal members of parliament are also quite different from the Israeli case considered earlier. Whereas Israeli minority governments typically are faced with intensely ideological parties elected in a single national constituency, Irish governments commonly confront a collection of independent deputies, who for electoral reasons have very strong incentives to secure benefits for their constituencies. Hence the Irish predilection for particularistic government concessions.

*Denmark: issue-specific coalitions and policy concessions*

A third and final example will reveal yet another pattern of legislative coalition building. Denmark is, as Chapter 3 has shown, the epitome of a political system given to minority governments. Of 25 postwar governments, only 3 have *not* been undersized. Hence, legislative majority-building practices have of necessity been developed. Danish legislative coalitions are, like the Israeli cases, largely built on policy concessions. However, especially since 1973 they tend to “bundle” issues much less than Israeli governments, although perhaps more than their opposite numbers in Ireland. And although Denmark resembles Norway and Sweden in the extent to which government concessions are policy based, it differs somewhat from the extreme disaggregation, or ad hoc majority building, of these two neighboring countries.

The bifurcation of the party system into a socialist and a nonsocialist bloc is somewhat less pronounced in Denmark than in the other Scandinavian countries (Fitzmaurice, 1983: 258; Särilvik, 1983: 138). Yet only in the years from 1957 to 1964 and again from 1978 to 1979 has the country been governed by coalition cabinets that have bridged

this divide. Legislative coalitions between socialists and nonsocialists have been much more common, especially in the 1940s and 1950s and after 1973. Clearly, electoral considerations have been an important deterrent to formalized cooperation between socialists and nonsocialists (Fitzmaurice, 1986; Särilvik, 1983; Strom, 1986).

Given the multitude of Danish minority governments, it is no wonder that a variety of legislative coalitions have been tried. Some Social Democratic governments (notably Krag III and IV) have relied heavily on the "captive" support of the Socialist People's party (SF). Other Social Democratic governments (e.g., Hansen I, Jørgensen II) have preferred to seek cooperation from the centrist "bourgeois" parties. Governments led by Liberals (V) (Kristensen, Eriksen I and II, and Hartling) have cooperated closely with the Radicals (RV) and the Conservatives (KF). And some governments have preferred shifting ad hoc legislative coalitions.

Yet the most salient feature of Danish coalition politics, especially in recent years, is the formation of relatively formalized legislative accommodations (*forlig*), which have tended to be fairly durable but sharply bounded in policy space. In other words, Danish minority governments have bundled issues temporally but not across all policy dimensions. Therefore, different coalitions have often been built in different policy areas. Thus, governments may rely on one policy coalition for their budgetary policies, but have a different majority (or no majority, as the case may be) for their foreign policies. Commonly, such agreements have been negotiated bilaterally and often with a coalition larger than minimum winning size (see Särilvik, 1983: 121-2; Thomas, 1982). The concessions offered by Danish governments have been almost exclusively policy based, if for no other reason than because spoils in Danish politics are so restricted.

The four-party nonsocialist governments under Poul Schlüter (since 1982) offer examples of such majority-building strategies. The four parties participating in Schlüter's three cabinets (the Conservatives, the Liberals, the Center Democrats, and the Christian People's party) have never been close to a parliamentary majority in their own right. Schlüter's first "four-leaf-clover" government relied heavily on the Radicals for legislative support. However, the Radicals refused to support the government on defense and environmental issues. Hence, the government regularly lost votes on defense issues in its first three

years and in 1984 had to reach an accommodation with the Social Democrats on the defense budget. Previously, Schlüter had lost votes on the NATO medium-range missile deployment issue, but survived a no confidence motion on this issue in June 1983, when the libertarian Progress party supported the government. In addition, Schlüter has faced a Folketing (Parliament) much less enamored with the European Community than his governments have been.

The Radicals also have balked at some of Schlüter's austerity budgets. Thus, in 1983 the support of the Radicals and the Progress party arrived only at a late stage of deliberation, and in 1984 the government's budget was defeated, leading to premature parliamentary dissolution. (The election returned the government with an improved parliamentary basis.) However, on economic policies Schlüter has often been able to forge alliances with the right-wing Progress party. Hence, his governments have in general achieved greater success in domestic policy areas than in foreign and security policy.

The patchwork of legislative coalitions that has characterized Danish politics has been a matter of necessity rather than choice. Danish cabinets have frequently found themselves in the unenviable position of needing the legislative support of *several* opposition parties. The willingness of opposition parties to commit themselves to wholesale legislative support has at least since 1973 been severely circumscribed by two distinctive features of Danish party politics in this era: *intense electoral competition* and *policy dispersion* along multiple dimensions. Since the early 1970s Denmark has experienced one of the highest rates of electoral volatility in the Western world (Pedersen, 1983, 1987). And the familiar left-right dimension characteristic of Scandinavian politics has been replaced by at least two issue dimensions of competition (Holmstedt and Schou, 1987; Pedersen, 1987). These conditions have promoted cabinet instability and made opposition parties shy even of the compromises implicit in legislative coalitions.

The ability of minority governments to form and survive in spite of these obstacles is clearly aided by institutional arrangements. The Danish constitution has little to say about the process of government formation, and the confidence requirement is purely negatively formulated: "A Minister shall not remain in office after the Folketing has passed a vote of no confidence in him" (Article 15; quoted in Pesonen and Thomas, 1983: 83). According to Pesonen and Thomas,

The negative formulation, which contrasts with the Swedish practice, . . . has permitted the relatively frequent minority governments which Denmark has experienced, often as the only feasible solution to a fragmented political system, and allows governments to seek their support from different quarters for different issues. (1983: 83)

Danish minority governments have not only survived. They have often shown "a remarkable ability to deliver the goods" (Elder, 1975), as when the economic achievements of Schlüter's first government were described by the *Financial Times* as "spectacular" (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1984: 32686).

### Explaining legislative strategies

The examples of Israel, Ireland, and Denmark illustrate the great diversity of legislative strategies employed by minority governments. After juxtaposing three such different cases, one might be tempted simply to note their uniqueness or to revert to purely historical explanations. It is possible, however, to explain the differences between these three political systems in a fairly simple manner without going deep into their histories. In discussing these cases, I have offered some preliminary explanations of their differences. It is now time to tie these explanatory efforts together in a coherent framework.

As I have already argued, legislative strategies differ in terms of both coalition membership and the general policy content of the governments' concessions. We need to look at different factors to explain variation along each of these two dimensions. Differences in membership consistency are largely a function of two factors: the government's *bargaining power* and its *agenda control*.

Minority governments without a comprehensive support agreement constantly need to build legislative majorities. For this end, they can offer a variety of office and policy inducements to members of the opposition. The government's objective is to purchase support for the best possible legislative program at the lowest possible cost. Everything else being equal, minority governments would prefer purely ad hoc coalitions. By negotiating each issue separately and on an ad hoc basis, the typical minority government can in each case pick the least

"expensive" coalition partner available. This is especially profitable if there are many feasible coalition partners, if different policy dimensions have different salience for the various opposition parties, and if their trade-off functions between office and policy differ.

Formal external support agreements, therefore, are the *least* attractive legislative strategy for minority governments that want to maximize their policy influence. However, support agreements may offer some additional viability. And we shall see that such agreements may enhance cabinet durability under some circumstances. Formal minority solutions should therefore be the recourse of risk-averse parties preoccupied with their viability in office. Parties that are more willing to trade off durability for policy influence should prefer shifting majorities. Governments that expect to be stable should be least concerned about marginal gains in durability and most inclined to ad hoc majority building. The stronger the government, therefore, the greater the tendency toward shifting coalitions. The "strength" of the government in turn depends largely on its bargaining power and the degree to which it enjoys agenda control.

### *Bargaining power*

Social scientists have made several notable attempts to formalize and measure bargaining power (e.g., Banzhaf, 1965; Holler, 1982; Shapley and Shubik, 1954). Valuable as they are, the power indexes that have been developed are of limited utility for our purposes. The most serious restriction is that they treat all "winning" coalitions as equiprobable, an assumption that is patently implausible to the extent that parties are policy seekers, or even vote seekers. For minority governments seeking legislative coalitions, bargaining power is maximized when (1) a large number of possible coalitions that satisfy their legislative demands exists, (2) membership in these coalitions is dispersed across a large number of opposition parties, and (3) these parties are close to the government in policy space. The greater the number of coalitions that would do, the lesser the dependence on any small set of partners. The more policy compatible these partners are, the better off the government is, and the greater the probability that it will build shifting majorities.

Advantages in bargaining power have facilitated the frequent and

urable minority governments formed by Social Democrats in Norway and Sweden. These governments have generally only had to secure the support of either the respective party to their left, or *any one* of the bourgeois parties to their right. Besides, the Social Democrats have frequently been fortunate enough to control the median legislator along the dominant left-right axis, which makes them very difficult to dislodge. Similarly, several Irish Fianna Fáil cabinets have had the good fortune of needing only a small number of votes from a pool of independent deputies. Israeli minority cabinets have also faced a choice among a number of small parties but have been constrained by the extreme policy positions taken by many of these parties. Danish and Italian minority cabinets, on the other hand, have suffered from the need for *multiple* partners and the relative lack of such parties in their policy neighborhood.

#### *Agenda control*

The second factor that affects the degree of the consistency of coalition membership is the government's agenda control. To the extent that the government can choose the timing, framing, and coupling of issues before the legislature, it is better positioned to select its preferred level of issue aggregation. Since unconstrained governments generally prefer a disaggregated agenda, a high degree of agenda control favors an ad hoc issue-by-issue legislative strategy.

Two institutional features that affect the government's control of the agenda have already been discussed in the analysis of government formation, namely, *investiture requirements* and *legislative committee structure*. Lax investiture requirements and a decentralized committee structure are factors that promote minority government formation in the first place. The same features promote ad hoc (shifting) legislative coalitions once the government is in office. If a government does not have to seek parliamentary approval for a comprehensive legislative program before assuming office, it is obviously much better positioned to pursue ad hoc majorities. And if issues in different areas can be dealt with independently in separate and mutually insulated committees, the government has similar opportunities. If such committees hold closed meetings and enjoy deference on the floor, so much the better.

Agenda control is the key to understanding formal support agree-

ments. Curiously, the property that best seems to predict the presence of such agreements and formal minority governments is a republican form of government. Of the 345 partisan governments in the sample, 188 represent republican regimes and 157 monarchies. However, 32 of 37 support agreements and 12 of 14 formal minority governments are found in the former regime type. This seemingly peculiar correlation is neither a pure coincidence nor a consequence of republicanism per se. Rather, republicanism tends to coincide with modern constitutions and legislatures, where investiture and confidence procedures tend to be highly formalized and explicitly regulated. On the other hand, countries that have retained a monarchical form of government typically have informal and ambiguous rules based on tradition and interpretation. This constitutional flexibility allows incoming governments to take more risks in building legislative coalitions. Monarchies thus afford their governments much more agenda control, especially in their investiture regulations. As noted by Pesonen and Thomas (1983), the laxity of Scandinavian investiture requirements has greatly facilitated the shifting legislative coalitions that characterize these countries. These practices have been further promoted by the decentralization and intimacy of committee deliberations in these countries (Arter, 1984). The more rigid republican constitutions, on the other hand, predispose governments toward external support agreements.

Despite the fact that the country has a republican constitution, Irish minority cabinets have profited from the fact that the incoming Taoiseach need not present a comprehensive policy declaration. The British parliamentary legacy may also facilitate informal and shifting legislative coalitions. On the other hand, Italian and Israeli governments have much less control of the agenda at investiture. In the Italian case, this is partly offset by the extensive delegation of legislative powers to the parliamentary committees. Yet a higher level of issue aggregation is in these countries coupled with a lower degree of agenda control.

#### *Government concessions*

The policy content of government concessions is shaped by three general factors: (1) the relative availability of different forms of benefits, such as policy influence, constituency services, and office ben-

efits; (2) the relative value placed on these various benefits by the governing parties; and (3) the relative demand for different benefits by the parties whose support is sought. In other words, policy content is affected by supply as well as demand conditions.

Political systems differ greatly in the extent to which they offer government incumbents office spoils and opportunities to render services to constituents. Italy, with its plethora of public agencies and enterprises, offers governing parties a vast array of rewards. The Scandinavian nations, on the other hand, place rather severe restrictions on the availability of public offices and monies. Likewise, the demand of opposition parties for office and policy goods varies greatly between and within political systems. At one extreme, minor Israeli religious parties such as the Agudat Israel and the Paoli Agudat Israel have been motivated almost exclusively by intense policy preferences. At the other extreme, independent Irish deputies in the Dáil have often been driven by a strong concern for services for their constituents, sometimes coupled with a desire for office benefits for themselves.

Such differences in demand are in turn driven partly by organizational features of political parties and partly by institutional characteristics of the political system. Clientelistic parties and parties of notables will tend toward particularistic demands with a low policy content. Internally democratic mass parties will tend toward the other extreme. And electoral systems will induce particularistic demands to the extent that they promote constituency ties over party cohesion.

Finally, the policy content of the government's concessions to the opposition depends on how highly the governing parties themselves value the various goods at their disposal. If the marginal value to the governing parties of the policy compromises that must be made in order to build a legislative majority is lower than the alternative cost in particularistic benefits and services, then policy concessions will be made. Of course, the utility of different benefits to governing parties depends on the same factors that affect the preferences of opposition parties. However, since preferences may vary within countries, governing parties may seek legislative coalition partners with complementary preferences (see Luebbert, 1986, for a related argument). Thus, office seekers in the Likud may prefer to build alliances with the intense policy seekers in the smaller religious parties.

In sum, similar patterns of policy content can be driven by different supply and demand conditions. Whereas in Israel the high level of policy content is driven mainly by the strong demand of the religious parties, in Scandinavia a similar level of policy content appears to be a function more of the limited institutional supply of office benefits. The particularism of Irish concessions seems primarily caused by the demands of the pivotal players in that legislature. Italy presents a more complex picture that falls between these extremes in policy content. The Italian case will be described in greater detail in Chapter 5.

### Performance in office

Let us now turn our attention to the *quality* of minority government performance in office. Measuring the performance of parliamentary governments is no easy task. Harry Eckstein (1971) has pointed out some general problems of studying political performance, which apply in full force to the issue of government performance. Performance measures easily become too vague and general (e.g., "system maintenance"), or they are defined in excessively narrow and arbitrary terms, which may even be politically controversial (e.g., allocations of government expenditure).

Although few students of political performance claim to have developed an exhaustive account of requisite functions, many have adopted an essentially functionalist approach (Eckstein, 1971; Powell, 1982a). Some notion of politically central and necessary activities can serve as a reasonable guide to political performance. Studies of *government* performance have not often been derived explicitly from such conceptions, but functionalist thinking again underlies much of this work (see Almond and Powell, 1978; Blondel, 1968; Di Palma, 1977; Finer, 1975; Spiro, 1959). Two sorts of government performance measures have dominated the literature: government duration (stability) and quantitative measures of parliamentary legislation. Both are comfortably derived from a systemic functionalist perspective, in the sense that legislative activity certainly is a crucial activity in modern democracies and that a minimum of government stability appears to be a requisite for decisional efficacy.

So far we have adopted not only a functionalist, but also a systemic, perspective on government performance. However, functions and the performance relevant to them may well be identified on a subsystemic rather than systemic level. That is to say, we may try to identify the critical activities of *cabinets* more narrowly defined without direct regard for their consequences for the polity as a whole. This shift in focus does not necessarily alter the operational variables involved in analyzing cabinet performance, since legislative productivity and stability can be construed as subsystemic as well as systemic requisites.

There is, however, a fundamentally different approach to the study of government performance. Instead of asking the functional question, we could derive cabinet performance measures from the objectives (utility functions) of the political parties that form them. Rather than asking whether the activities of a particular government serve the needs of the political system or its legislative subsystem, we could seek to determine whether they further the objectives of the participating parties. If, for example, we take political parties to be office seekers, we could ask to what extent a specific cabinet fulfilled the office objectives of the parties of which it was composed. To the extent, then, that parties are office seekers, policy seekers, and vote seekers, we can use these utility stipulations to derive measures of government performance.

This is what the remainder of this chapter will do. I shall first discuss a very conventional measure of office-seeking performance, namely, *cabinet duration*. Next I shall consider two more indirect measures of policy-seeking performance: the *cause* and *mode* of the government's *resignation*. These measures will in Chapters 5 and 6 be supplemented with more contextually sensitive measures of policy-seeking cabinet performance in Italy and Norway. Finally, I introduce two measures of vote-seeking cabinet performance: *electoral success* and *alternation*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Clearly the treatment of policy objectives in this chapter is a formal one, which does not address such substantive concerns as, e.g., the government's contribution to economic growth. This research strategy is partly due to the technical difficulty of identifying such policy consequences. More basically, however, my overriding concern is to enhance the validity of these performance measures across all countries and parties. Whereas different parties may vary in their primary economic objectives, it seems safe to assume that they all want their governments to be durable, electorally successful, and internally consensual.

This derivation of performance measures from the objectives of the participating political parties does not preclude assessments of systemic or subsystemic performance. Many of the empirical measures we shall consider could well be incorporated into a functional analysis of government performance. We shall consider these issues at the end of the chapter.

### *Office performance*

Just as the assumption of office pursuit is the most common one in coalition theory, so also are office-related measures the most common in studies of cabinet performance. Specifically, government performance is often measured as *cabinet duration*, in the number of days, weeks, months, or years different governments remain in office after inauguration (Blondel, 1980; Browne, Frendreis, and Gleiber, 1986; Dodd, 1976; Lijphart, 1984b; Sanders and Herman, 1977; Warwick, 1979). The longer this duration, the more successful the government. We assume, then, that once in office, incumbents will seek to perpetuate the coalitional arrangements that brought them these benefits.<sup>5</sup>

We may wish to distinguish between government *durability* (as a theoretical expectation) and actual duration (as an observed value) (see Browne, Frendreis, and Gleiber, 1984), although these terms are used interchangeably and loosely in much of the literature. My measure here is strictly one of duration, measured in whole months from the date of the formal investiture. Any discussion of durability is therefore strictly shorthand for these observations. Termination dates are a little more difficult to establish than formation dates. In cases where the administration continued in office through general elections, the date of the election is used as a termination point. Otherwise, the termination point is the date the prime minister submitted the government's resignation.<sup>6</sup> Duration figures have been rounded off to the nearest whole number of months. Changes of government are defined as previously.

<sup>5</sup> The underlying assumption may be that any cabinet that forms is likely to be and remain in Nash equilibrium, which means that no party can improve its payoff by any unilateral action, such as defection from the government.

<sup>6</sup> Resignations that were subsequently withdrawn or refused have been discounted.

Table 4.2. *Duration by cabinet type (in months)*

Cabinet type	Mean	Standard deviation	(N)
Majority party	30.0	16.9	(44)
Majority coalition	17.7	14.6	(166)
Minority formal	13.2	9.3	(14)
Minority substantive	14.1	12.9	(107)
Nonpartisan	4.1	2.7	(11)
All governments	17.5	15.0	(342)

The conventional wisdom suggests that minority governments are less durable than those with a majority. We also expect to find that coalitions are shorter lived than single-party governments. However, Dodd (1976) argues against the latter expectation, stressing the critical effect of minimum winning size. The results presented in Table 4.2 are consistent with the prevailing expectations. Both types of majority governments have on average been longer lived than either type of minority government, whereas the latter have tended to last much longer than nonpartisan administrations. Among majority governments, single-party cabinets have been much more durable than coalitions.

It is not difficult to see that coalitional status (coalition vs. single party) is much more strongly correlated with duration than numerical status (majority vs. minority). On average, majority coalitions have lasted 25% longer than substantive minority governments. However, majority party cabinets have been more than twice as durable as substantive minority governments and about 70% longer lived than majority coalitions. In other words, whereas the average duration difference between substantive minority and majority coalition governments is about 3.5 months, a majority party government tends to outlast either of these cabinet types by more than a year.

The durability advantage of single-party governments over coalitions is well supported for minority as well as majority governments. The average duration of single-party governments, regardless of numerical status, exceeds that of coalition governments by almost 40% (21.8 vs. 15.8 months). Interestingly, the liability in longevity for coalition governments is most pronounced for substantive minority

governments. Whereas such coalitions last on average only 7.8 months, substantive minority cabinets consisting of only one party are only insignificantly shorter lived than majority coalitions (17.2 vs. 17.7 months).

These figures reflect the fact that many majority party governments last an entire regular legislative term, whereas only a small proportion of other cabinets do. These differences will be illuminated in the next section. But note also that neither minority cabinets nor majority coalitions are anywhere near as transitory as nonpartisan governments. In fact, even formal minority cabinets are three to four times as durable as administrations without a partisan basis. Hence, it would certainly be incorrect to think of either minority or coalition governments as purely transitional. Some such governments may indeed be no more ambitious than caretaker administrations, but the generalization would be invalid.

Except for majority party cabinets, the duration figures are on the whole rather unimpressive and much lower than those reported in many other studies (e.g., Dodd, 1976). These low figures are in large part an artifact of restrictive counting rules, which yield a larger number of shorter-lived governments than many alternative conventions (see Lijphart, 1984b). For example, my 21 Swedish postwar governments would be reduced to 8 if only changes in partisan composition counted as changes of government. Also, the fact that governments rather than countries are the units of analysis in effect skews the sample toward the low end of the duration range. The less durable governments in a given country are, the more heavily that country is weighted in this sample of governments.<sup>7</sup> The justification for the counting rules I have adopted is spelled out in Chapter 3. The point here is simply that duration figures are especially sensitive to these choices and should be interpreted accordingly.

#### *Policy performance*

Cabinet duration is of course no guarantee of legislative effectiveness. Sometimes the opposite may be the case, as when governments are

<sup>7</sup> However, my restrictive counting rules, in which each general election automatically constitutes a change of government, actually counteracts some of the overrepresentation of polities with low-duration governments.

tolerated precisely because they are inoffensive and do not "rock the boat." Obviously, then, duration figures cannot tell us much about the relative policy performance of different cabinet types. Unfortunately, there are few alternative sources of cross-nationally comparable data. Policy effectiveness is greatly constrained by a whole host of institutional factors, for which it is next to impossible to control across 15 countries. Chapters 5 and 6 will introduce a variety of country-specific data on legislative performance in Italy and Norway. These analyses make use of the best data available in each case and are therefore not strictly comparable. To replicate these analyses for each of 15 countries would clearly be beyond this volume.

Since direct and comparable measures of policy effectiveness are difficult to come by, I shall employ two variables that more indirectly tap this performance dimension. These measures are the *cause* and *mode* of the government's resignation. I assume that the circumstances surrounding a government's demise reflect its policy effectiveness. Most particularly, these circumstances are likely to reflect the degree of cohesion within a government, which must be at least a necessary condition for policy effectiveness.

Causes of government resignation have been divided into six categories:

1. Government disunity (inter- or intraparty);
2. Parliamentary defeats on votes of confidence;
3. Parliamentary defeats on other bills;
4. Elections, whether regularly scheduled or premature;
5. Systemic, as when a government is driven to resign because of war, an international crisis, civil unrest, or other critical events outside the legislative or electoral arena; and
6. Personal or constitutional factors, such as the death, ill health, or voluntary retirement of the prime minister, scandals of various sorts, or, in some countries, the election of a new president.

These categories have in practice proved to be sufficiently exhaustive and mutually exclusive to present few ambiguities. One proof of the fit lies in the fact that the broadest and least well defined category (systemic causes) accounts for the smallest proportion of

cases (3%).<sup>8</sup> A breakdown of causes of resignation by cabinet type is presented in Table 4.3. My assumption is that certain causes of resignation reflect a more troubled life than others. In particular, resignations out of internal disunity or parliamentary defeat indicate a lesser degree of policy cohesion and effectiveness than others. Electoral resignations, especially if they are in fact constitutionally mandated, are an especially benign way to go. Personal and constitutional resignations are in large part equally innocuous, as when Urho Kekkonen resigned the Finnish premiership in 1956 after he had been elected president, or when Winston Churchill retired from the British prime ministership in 1955. However, in some cases personally caused resignations reflect profound individual or institutional failures, as in the Italian case of Arnaldo Forlani's resignation in 1981 in the wake of the P-2 Masonic conspiracy scandal, which involved a large number of prominent Italians and shook the state and the Christian Democratic party in their foundations.

Table 4.3 reveals large and systematic differences in causes of resignation between cabinet types. Since there have been so few formal minority or nonpartisan governments, it makes little sense to analyze these figures in detail. The most striking difference in resignations is between majority party governments and all others. Majority party governments exhibit by far the most "benign" pattern. More than two-thirds of these resignations have been due to elections, and many of the remainder have been caused by retirements or other simple changes of personnel within the governing party.

The most interesting difference for present purposes is between substantive minority and majority coalition cabinets. Note that almost half of all majority coalitions have suffered the trauma of internal disunity, a fate shared by only just over one-fifth of all substantive minority cabinets. On the other hand, minority governments are the

<sup>8</sup> One apparent problem with these categories is that government disunity might be a cause of a subsequent parliamentary defeat on a confidence motion or other bill. Such cases have been coded as parliamentary defeats. They are, however, less common than one might believe. The prevalent doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility makes government disunity on a confidence motion a very unlikely event in most political systems. Even the anticipation of defeat on some other important bill is most often enough to send the government packing before any actual vote is taken. Presumably, the electoral and legislative ramifications of such defeats weigh heavily on the minds of party leaders.

Table 4.3. Cause of resignation by cabinet type (percentages by cabinet type)

Cabinet type	Government disunity	Parliamentary confidence	Parliamentary-policy defeat	Electoral	Systemic	Personal/constitutional	(N)
Majority party	5	0	0	68	0	27	(44)
Majority coalition	47	4	6	31	4	8	(166)
Minority formal	36	14	0	29	0	21	(14)
Minority substantive	21	22	10	35	4	8	(106)
Nonpartisan	27	9	18	36	9	0	(11)
All governments	32	9	7	37	3	11	(341)

only cabinet type commonly defeated on votes of confidence. This is hardly surprising, since majority governments can lose confidence votes only if some of their own supporters break ranks on these most important of votes. On the other hand, substantive minority governments in turn have a slight "edge" over majority coalitions in electoral resignations.

All in all, substantive minority governments have done no worse, and arguably a bit better, than majority coalitions in causes of government resignations. If substantive minority governments are broken down into single-party and coalition cabinets, interesting distinctions again appear. Single-party minority governments resign more often due to electoral, systemic, or personal or constitutional causes, and less often because of internal disarray or legislative defeats. Thus, the most prevalent subtype of minority governments has even greater advantages over majority coalitions than the class of substantive minority governments as a whole.

The cause of resignation, as defined earlier, informs us of the institutional setting in which each government has met its fate. However, this classification scheme cannot serve as a fully reliable guide to the trauma of resignation. To be sure, defeats on confidence motions are hardly trivial and do not often befall legislatively successful cabinets. However, even such resignations can be engineered by the government itself, as in 1972, 1979, and 1987, when Italian minority governments led by Giulio Andreotti (1972 and 1979) and Amintore Fanfani (1987) deliberately lost votes of confidence in order to clear the way for parliamentary dissolution.

To complement the picture of government resignation and clear up some of the ambiguities, let us therefore consider also the *mode* of resignation, which I have classified in terms of these three categories:

1. *Defeat or crisis*, when the government is forced to resign or does so under adversity;
2. *Voluntary* resignations, when the government is under no strong pressure to resign, but does so in order to reshuffle personnel, broaden its parliamentary base, and so on;
3. *Technical* resignations, when the resignation is neither voluntary nor due to any defeat or crisis. Technical resignations tend to

Table 4.4. *Mode of resignation by cabinet type (percentages by cabinet type)*

Cabinet type	Crisis/defeat	Voluntary	Technical	(N)
Majority party	45	20	34	(44)
Majority coalition	84	5	11	(165)
Minority formal	57	43	0	(14)
Minority substantive	66	18	16	(107)
Nonpartisan	82	18	0	(11)
All governments	72	13	15	(341)

be artifacts of my rules for counting governments, as when the prime minister dies or the government goes through a general election without any change in premiership, partisanship, or numerical status.<sup>9</sup>

These modes of resignation fall into a clear hierarchy of severity, with defeat/crisis signifying the greatest and technical resignations the least amount of trauma. Voluntary resignations form the intermediate category, mostly because of the heterogeneity of this category. Voluntary resignations may be prompted by some crowning legislative success, as when Danish premier Jens Otto Krag retired after successfully leading his country into the European Community. On the other hand, Giovanni Leone's voluntary resignation in 1969 was by his own admission precipitated by his government's inability to bring to an end a general strike by government employees or to win support for its legislative agenda.

Table 4.4 presents a breakdown of modes of resignation by cabinet type. The results are quite compatible with those in Table 4.3. Again majority party governments exhibit the most favorable pattern of resignations, with technical resignation accounting for a third and crises and defeats for less than half. As in many other respects, nonpartisan governments have the least benign record, but in this case majority coalitions run a close second. Five of six majority coalition resignations have been due to crises or defeat, as compared

<sup>9</sup> For a general election to count as a technical resignation, there must have been no change of premiership, partisanship, or numerical status. In all other cases, general elections have been assigned to the category *defeat or crisis*.

to two-thirds of the resignations of substantive minority cabinets. The latter cabinet type also has the second highest proportion of technical resignations.

As far as resignations can tell us a story about policy performance, therefore, substantive minority cabinets have a clear advantage over majority coalitions. As in the previous analysis, single-party under-sized governments have a somewhat more favorable profile than minority governments consisting of several parties. The face validity of these results is enhanced by the fact that the superiority of single-party cabinets in general and majority party cabinets in particular is so consistent with the other measures of government performance. Even readers who would prefer more direct measures of policy performance (and who would not?) should find that these results supplement and reinforce the data on office and electoral performance.

#### *Electoral performance*

The final performance category pertains to the success of various cabinets in subsequent elections. To the extent that parties are vote seekers, this must be a critical part of their own balance sheet for government participation. As I argued earlier, the expectation of a thumbs down from the electorate is precisely the most likely reason that a party may decline an opportunity to participate in government. And the tendency for incumbents, and especially coalition governments, to lose support is an important element in the calculus I have sketched out.

As in the case of policy performance, I shall present two complementary measures of electoral performance, namely, *electoral success* and *subsequent alternation*. Electoral success is simply the governing parties' aggregate gain or loss in percentage points of total popular vote in the next general election. Thus, the unit of analysis is the set of governing parties collectively. The results for the various cabinet types are reported in Table 4.5. Note that the electoral incumbency cost is shared by all cabinet types.<sup>10</sup> Overall, the mean loss of vote

<sup>10</sup> Note that no figures are calculable for nonpartisan governments, for the obvious reason that they are not composed of identifiable parties that contest elections. The same exclusion applies to the analysis of alternation (later in this chapter).

Table 4.5. *Subsequent electoral success by cabinet type (in percentage points of total popular vote)*

Cabinet type	All governments			Pre-electoral governments only		
	Mean	Standard deviation	(N)	Mean	Standard deviation	(N)
Majority party	-3.04	5.09	(44)	-2.73	5.32	(30)
Majority coalition	-4.54	6.44	(164)	-4.26	6.39	(52)
Minority formal	-0.97	3.65	(14)	-2.10	3.54	(4)
Minority substantive	-1.30	6.57	(105)	-1.24	6.27	(37)
All governments	-3.15	6.39	(327)	-2.91	6.11	(123)

share amounts to more than 3%, which is sufficient to support my theoretical argument and consistent with previous findings.

These incumbency costs, however, are far from equally shared by all cabinet types. Minority governments have on average lost less than half as much as majority party governments and not much more than one-fourth as much as majority coalitions. These very heavy casualties (4.5%) suffered by majority coalitions could indeed be an effective deterrent to the formation of such governments. Relative to existing vote shares the differential between majority coalition and minority governments is somewhat less dramatic, since majority coalitions obviously have more votes to lose. However, their average losses are still twice as large as those of substantive minority cabinets.

Electoral gains or losses can most meaningfully be attributed to governments holding office at the time of elections. In some of the cases we have considered, however, three or four governments may have intervened between the resignation of the government in question and the next general election. The right-hand side of Table 4.5 excludes such cases and limits the analysis to governments in office at the time of elections. This exclusion does not change the results in any meaningful way, except that cabinets in office at election time systematically perform a little better than the others, regardless of type.<sup>11</sup> Since the incentives for vote seeking are also greater for gov-

<sup>11</sup> The only exception to the electoral advantage of governments in office at election

ernments facing elections, the results are consistent with the thrust of my theoretical argument as well as with the previous results. The results are also consistent if we use parties, rather than governments, as the unit of analysis. The only notable difference is that majority party governments do somewhat better. Parties in substantive minority governments have the highest likelihood of electoral gain, followed by majority party cabinets. Parties in majority coalitions face the dimmest prospects.<sup>12</sup>

We can gain a richer understanding of the electoral fortunes of various cabinet types by considering a second measure of electoral performance: subsequent alternation. Alternation measures the degree of turnover in office from one government to the next. Obviously, the greater the turnover, the worse the performance of the first government. Thus, alternation allows us to consider how electoral results play themselves out at the next stage of interparty deliberation. In other words, this variable gives us an indication of the consequences of electoral results for the bargaining power of the parties in office.

Operationally, I measure alternation as the aggregate proportion of legislative seats held by parties changing status between government and opposition in the change of government in question.<sup>13</sup> Since this is an unconventional variable, a hypothetical example may clarify. Let party A in a given legislature have 45% of the seats, party B, 35%, and party C, 20%.<sup>14</sup> Party A rules alone in government 1. If government 2 consists of parties B and C, all parties will have changed status between governments 1 and 2, and the alternation score of government 1 will be  $.45 + .35 + .20 = 1$ . If, on the other hand, government 2 was a coalition of parties A and C, then only C would have changed status (by entering government), and the alternation score for government 1 would be .2.

Table 4.6 shows the actual alternation scores of the various cabinet

time concerns formal minority governments. Given the small number of such governments, this exception is hardly meaningful.

<sup>12</sup> These results are available from the author upon request.

<sup>13</sup> Where general elections intervene between two governments, alternation scores reflect the shares of seats held by the various parties *after* the election. For technical reasons the maximum alternation score is .98.

<sup>14</sup> Readers who like empirical examples may think of this party system as the Irish Republic and the parties as Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and the Irish Labour party, respectively.

Table 4.6. *Subsequent alternation by cabinet type*

Cabinet type	All governments			Nontechnical resignations only		
	Mean	Standard deviation	(N)	Mean	Standard deviation	(N)
Majority party	.216	.404	(44)	.328	.461	(29)
Majority coalition	.190	.246	(158)	.212	.252	(139)
Minority formal	.124	.167	(14)	.124	.167	(14)
Minority substantive	.297	.353	(105)	.340	.359	(88)
All governments	.226	.310	(321)	.262	.320	(270)

*Note:* Alternation scores represent the proportion of legislative seats held by parties changing governmental status.

types. Note the discrepancy between these results and the figures for electoral success. Substantive minority governments have been subject to the greatest amount of subsequent turnover, and majority party cabinets have experienced greater losses than majority coalitions. Thus, the governments that experience the greatest electoral damage seem to suffer the least loss of bargaining power, and the most electorally successful governments are most apt to be replaced.

Note also the large standard deviation for majority party governments compared to majority coalitions. These results indicate that the typical pattern of turnover varies fundamentally between these two cabinet types. Majority party cabinets typically form in two-party or near two-party (Westminster) systems (Lijphart, 1984a), where a change of government means either a full rotation in office or no partisan change at all. Majority coalitions form in more fragmented party systems where intermediate degrees of turnover are much more feasible and common. The right-hand side of Table 4.6 presents the results when technical resignations, as discussed earlier, are excluded from the analysis. In this subset, the average alternation scores of substantive minority and especially majority party governments rise substantially.

Overall, the most interesting result in Table 4.6 is that *substantive minority governments resemble majority party governments rather than*

*majority coalitions.* We have seen several signs of familiarity between these two cabinet types. These similarities suggest that although substantive minority governments are alternatives to majority coalitions, they reflect payoff structures and party expectations that have more in common with majority party governments. With the help of the more intensive analyses in Chapters 5 and 6, we shall return to these issues in the concluding chapter.

#### *Country-by-country analysis*

So far we have not attempted to disaggregate the performance results by country or any other background variable. As the final part of the performance analysis, Table 4.7 breaks the results down by country for four variables: duration, mode of resignation,<sup>15</sup> electoral success, and alternation. I shall extract only a few points from the wealth of information presented in this table.

Note first that in the few countries where formal minority cabinets form, they have tended to be more durable than substantive minority cabinets and almost as durable as majority coalitions. In most countries where minority cabinets have attained some longevity, however, they have typically not been externally supported. These results underscore the *defensive* nature of external support agreements and the fact that they are promoted by specific institutional arrangements that limit the government's agenda control and hinder minority government formation in the first place.

Whereas the results for government resignations exhibit a great deal of cross-national variation, the figures for electoral success are impressively uniform across countries. Note that majority coalition governments have suffered a mean loss in *every* country where such cabinets have formed. Even the other cabinet types have tended to fall "in the red," but less consistently so. Note, however, that of the countries that have experienced both majority coalitions and substantive minority cabinets, the undersized governments have had the electoral advantage in 10. The exception is the Netherlands, which has had only three minority governments. The results also show that

<sup>15</sup> The results presented for mode of resignation are the percentage of cases falling in the crisis/defeat category.

Table 4.7. Performance by cabinet type and country

Country	Duration <sup>a</sup>				Crisis resignation (mode) <sup>b</sup>				Electoral success <sup>c</sup>				Alternation <sup>d</sup>			
	FM	SM	MC	MP	FM	SM	MC	MP	FM	SM	MC	MP	FM	SM	MC	MP
Belgium	—	1.8	17.8	15.3	—	50	96	100	—	—	0.3	-3.7	-6.6	.25	.21	.32
Canada	—	18.6	—	40.0	—	50	—	63	—	—	3.7	—	-7.4	.22	—	.34
Denmark	23.5	19.2	28.7	—	50	68	67	—	-0.7	-0.7	-4.1	—	.03	.28	.30	—
Finland	13.7	6.3	17.2	—	67	38	85	—	-0.1	-1.8	-3.6	—	.19	.30	.22	—
France	4.5	3.7	5.2	—	100	90	94	—	5.1	-4.2	-11.6	—	.10	.22	.17	—
Iceland	—	5.3	32.4	—	—	75	64	—	—	-2.5	-4.0	—	—	.35	.37	—
Ireland	—	22.3	44.7	28.1	—	83	67	57	—	-3.6	-6.8	-3.2	—	.77	.63	.28
Israel	12.7	—	15.4	—	33	—	71	—	-5.8	—	-5.6	—	.21	—	.11	—
Italy	12.5	5.4	11.5	—	50	81	100	—	-1.2	0.6	-2.1	—	.07	.08	.07	—
Netherlands	—	3.3	28.7	—	—	100	93	—	—	-4.9	-1.9	—	—	.35	.22	—
Norway	—	18.4	31.0	31.7	—	73	67	33	—	-1.7	-2.7	1.4	—	.57	.33	.00
Portugal	—	17.0	8.3	—	—	100	60	—	—	6.4	-6.5	—	—	.48	.15	—
Spain	—	21.7	—	43.0	—	33	—	0	—	-16.7	—	-4.4	—	.20	—	.00
Sweden	—	28.1	23.2	15.0	—	36	60	50	—	-0.6	-1.0	-3.1	—	.20	.14	.00
United Kingdom	—	18.5	—	31.0	—	50	—	27	—	-0.6	—	-1.7	—	.48	—	.26
All countries	13.2	14.1	17.7	30.0	57	66	84	45	-1.0	-1.3	-4.5	-2.8	.12	.30	.19	.22

Abbreviations  
 FM Formal minority  
 SM Substantive minority  
 MC Majority coalition  
 MP Majority party  
<sup>a</sup>Means  
<sup>b</sup>Percentages

the favorable electoral performance of formal minority governments is in large part due to the two French cases.

Note finally that in general minority cabinets seem to perform best where they are most common. Consider Canada and Denmark, where substantive minority governments exceed the cross-national mean on all four performance indicators. It is evidently no accident that such cabinets get formed time and again in these countries, and this regularity supports the argument that rational anticipation is likely to produce minority cabinets in these polities.

### Minority governments in office: a summary

This chapter has examined the record of minority governments once in office. I have asked two basic questions: How do minority cabinets build legislative majorities, and how well do minority governments serve the objectives of the parties that form them? In the first part of the chapter, I sketched out different majority-building strategies, gave examples, and analyzed the conditions most conducive to each. In the second part of the chapter, I have considered minority government performance relative to three stipulated objectives of political parties: office, policy, and votes.

The analysis of minority government performance leaves us with a surprisingly favorable impression of these cabinets. To be sure, undersized governments tend to be somewhat less durable than majority coalitions, and the participating parties are more likely to be replaced in subsequent cabinet transitions. On the other hand, minority governments enjoy substantial advantages in electoral success and are less likely to resign under traumatic circumstances. Clearly, minority governments are in most respects inferior to *single-party* majority cabinets. However, these two cabinet types are not alternatives to each other.

It would be reasonable to ask whether the observed differences between minority governments and majority coalitions are in reality spurious and caused by structural factors that predispose parties toward one cabinet solution or another. In a previous analysis I have addressed this issue by controlling for the set of determinants of government formation examined in Chapter 3. Although some of

these factors did in fact interact with numerical status, none of the relationships we have found changed in any fundamental way when this set of controls was introduced. Interested readers can consult the published results (Strom, 1985).

Given the performance trade-offs between minority governments and majority coalitions, what choices should we expect rational parties to make? The most basic answer is that we certainly cannot rule out minority cabinets on performance grounds. To the extent that party leaders can accurately anticipate the performance differentials we have observed, there is no reason to expect them always to favor majority coalitions. On the contrary, *majority coalitions should be preferred only by parties that are strongly office motivated*. Policy-seeking and especially vote-seeking parties might well find minority governments to be a more attractive option. The more government stability a potential governing party is willing to trade off for policy effectiveness and electoral advantage, the more inclined it will be to opt for a minority cabinet. This is entirely consistent with the theoretical argument I developed in Chapter 2. To make sense of minority governments, we must assume that political parties (or their leaders) are future oriented (vote seekers), policy motivated, or preferably both. The empirical analysis shows that party leaders with such utility functions might indeed find minority governments especially attractive on the basis of their record in office.

The advantages of minority governments for such party leaders is of course no reason for the disinterested observer to take a benign view of this cabinet type. And we may ultimately want to determine what consequences minority government formation has for the political system as a whole, rather than just for the parties in government. This is too broad a question to answer in a general way here. However, the performance data we have examined may give us some leverage. Although these data were derived from a rational actor perspective on political parties, they may illuminate a functional question as well. In other words, if we knew the social value of different levels of alternation, government duration, electoral success, and circumstances of resignation, we might weigh the social costs and benefits of each cabinet type, just as I suggested in the calculus for each particular party.

There is no question that such a social calculus is much more

complicated and controversial. It is difficult to say what optimal levels of alternation and electoral success might be, and whether minority governments or majority coalitions would be closer to these values. Alternation is commonly considered a key to accountability, and on this score minority cabinets have a clear advantage. However, a scenario in which the electorate invariably soured on the incumbents hardly suggests the ultimate political harmony. The societal value of office performance is a little less difficult to establish. Frequent changes of government between elections are rarely desirable. Neither are traumatic government resignations. On these grounds, however, the choice between majority coalitions and minority governments again becomes a trade-off.

This is as far as the data allow us to go in resolving this issue. In sum, minority governments have certain performance advantages and certain liabilities when compared to alternative cabinet solutions. At the very least, it is not clear that the bottom line is negative, either for parties considering participation in such cabinets or for the political system as a whole. In the concluding chapter, we shall consider these results in a broader context and examine their consequences for our theories of democratic party systems.

## Who Plays the Coalition Game?

Real political parties consist of real politicians. These may be party leaders or cabinet ministers. They may be people who would like to be party leaders or cabinet ministers. They may be rank-and-file legislators, famous political has-beens, unsuccessful parliamentary candidates, local councillors, well-paid party professionals or voluntary party activists. Political parties have the chance to bargain for a place at the cabinet table because some, at least, of the electorate have voted for them at the most recent election, so there are also party supporters to be considered. These days, voters form an image of who they are voting for as a result of information, interpretation, and analysis purveyed by people working in the mass media. Any or all of these actors can influence the coalitional process. Each of them may well have quite distinct preferences about possible coalition outcomes.

All of this, of course, is saying no more than that coalitional behaviour is an inherent part of politics, that it is as rich and complex, as subtle and fascinating, as politics in general. Our problems arise when we must decide which actors, in particular, to focus our attention upon. This is especially a problem for formal coalition theorists, since an assumption about the identity and nature of the actors is one of the foundation stones upon which most formal theories are constructed. In practice, most theories operate on the assumption that political parties can be treated as 'unitary' actors. This rather neatly leaves open the matter of precisely who makes the key decisions within a particular political party, but it does none the less imply that decisions will be adhered to once they have been arrived at by the whole party, whatever its method of arriving at them. This carries the implication that coalition theories based on the unitary actor assumption will not be able to cope with situations in which one part of a particular party is in a particular coalition and the other

part is outside it. Indeed, in political systems in which this type of behaviour is endemic—arguably, for example, in the French Fourth Republic—coalition theorists often abandon any attempt at prediction altogether and exclude the entire class of cases.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the actors in the coalition game is a feature of the political process that is treated quite differently by the empirical European politics tradition and the game-theoretic tradition. Furthermore, it is something that has been used most effectively by empirical coalition theorists to criticize game theorists.<sup>2</sup> It is, after all, a matter of common sense and easily observable fact that decisions about whether to go into or to stay out of a particular coalition can cause deep divisions within a political party, and that such divisions can have a major impact on the makeup of the government eventually formed. On the other hand, it is also the case that party discipline in Europe is generally very high. If we choose to regard intraparty decision making as a black box, the contents of which we do not need to get involved with before we analyse coalition bargaining, then we can comfort ourselves with the reflection that, in recent times, at least, *parties do in practice tend to go into and come out of government as single actors*, however painful the wounds inflicted upon them inside the black box might have been.

Before moving on to consider the politics of coalition in greater detail, therefore, we must consider the extent to which it is plausible to regard parties as unitary actors. If we decide that we must indeed take intraparty politics into account, we must think about how we might do this.

### ARE PARTIES UNITARY ACTORS?

The simple answer to this question, of course, is that they are not. As with most simple answers to complex political problems, this one is not very useful. It is true but trivial, in precisely the same sense as it is true that the chair you are sitting on as you read this is not really a solid object at all but a collection of molecules with vast areas of open space in between them. While this indisputable fact may be of immense importance to those who are interested in molecules it is none the less the case that you, interested as you are in other things, will not come too badly

unstuck if you persist in treating it as a chair and sit on it. Thus, to sweep away one very unproductive line of argument without further ado, of course it is true that political parties are made up of many different types of actor with different and potentially conflicting interests; but this is not the point. The real question is, do parties behave as if they were unitary actors as far as the coalitional process is concerned?

We must be careful, however, not to define the problem out of existence. If we wish to go to the opposite extreme and argue in a determined fashion that parties are unitary actors, then we may do so by adopting some rather tough operational definitions. We might reasonably argue that, as far as coalition bargaining is concerned, what we are interested in are the things that go into and come out of coalitions, whether they are political parties or anything else. In this case we can get away with treating parties as if they are unitary actors as long as we do not find too many cases in which it is difficult to decide whether a particular party is in or out of a particular coalition, because some of it is in and some of it is out. We know that such situations are in practice rather rare, notwithstanding some notable exceptions in the French Fourth Republic and in Iceland during the 1980s. Almost all empirical analyses of the politics of coalition have implicitly adopted this relatively trouble free working solution; we are, if we stick to this line of defence, on reasonably solid ground.

We might well, however, be on solid ground in the middle of nowhere. The reason for this is that the politics of coalition could well transform the party system in ways that affect both the configuration of parties in the system and the internal politics of each party. In particular, as far as the argument about whether parties are unitary actors is concerned, the politics of coalition may split parties, while even the threat of such splits may constrain party decision makers. Particular forms of internal party organization, furthermore, may make it much more difficult for some parties to participate in coalitions than for others. Intraparty tensions such as these can have quite systematic and generalizable effects on the process of coalition bargaining, strengthening some parties and weakening others. In the rest of this section, therefore, we shall be looking for evidence on the probable effect of intraparty politics on interparty bargaining.

We must begin by reiterating the point that the legislative

behaviour of European parties is very disciplined. This means that the initial outcome of the politics of coalition, the formation of a coalition cabinet, tends to be brought about by legislative parties voting as unified blocks on the investiture of a government. Even Klaus von Beyme, someone who rarely passes up an opportunity to attack the application of formal coalition theory to European politics, does not demur from this conclusion.<sup>3</sup> Von Beyme is very sensitive to internal divisions within parties, arguing that 'the image of parties acting as monolithic units is a fiction which cannot be sustained . . . The united will of the party is a variation of the older fiction of the uniform will of the people . . .'<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding this, he points out, having reviewed evidence on internal party politics from a wide range of systems, that 'although nearly all the Western democracies assume that a member of parliament is free to vote as he wishes, even if they lay varying stress on this, the parties have increasingly strengthened the mechanisms whereby they can exercise control on their members of parliament'.<sup>5</sup> The result is that 'even in fragmented party systems party discipline in Europe is now between 80 and 90 per cent'—this latter conclusion being based on a review of roll call analyses.<sup>6</sup> Von Beyme thus leaves us with the clear impression that, even though intraparty decision making may be a process riddled with conflict, the eventual strategies that emerge are based on the assumption that the party functions as a unit. Certainly, no strong evidence is presented that might force us to reconsider this assumption, and this from an author who would not flinch from doing so if the evidence was there.

Even if parties behave in a unified manner in vital investiture votes, however, it may still be the case that intraparty politics affects the politics of coalition. The reason why most theorists to date have been able to get away without taking intraparty politics into account is precisely because they have homed in on the moment of coalition formation, the very moment when high levels of legislative party discipline may mean that intraparty politics matters least. Hans Daalder, another very experienced commentator on the politics of coalition in Europe, expresses this point quite clearly.

In most formal approaches the party is retained as a unitary actor. This is acceptable in a theoretical model. It is also politically relevant whenever a party does act as one actor; e.g., when it presents an election programme,

or decides to enter a cabinet on the basis of a decision that commits the entire party. . . . However, in the actual world of politics, it is hardly defensible to regard a party as a unitary actor . . . Even in the examples just given . . . there is bound to be disagreement before the decision is taken, as well as on its later application in practice . . . a decision on the investiture of a new coalition cabinet does not pre-empt a need for continuous decision making on concrete decisions to follow. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Daalder thus accepts that parties may behave as if they are unitary actors at the moment of entry into a coalition; but he argues that much of what is really interesting and important about coalition government, indeed, most of what happens after this moment of entry, may be left out by theories that cannot accommodate themselves to the processes of intraparty decision making.

Daalder raises the matter of what goes on inside the government. To this we might add the matter of what goes on outside the government. Parties that have been excluded from office may well consider the extent to which they are prepared to change policies, leaders and/or bargaining strategies in order to talk their way into a coalition. Particularly in circumstances in which party activists are more policy oriented than party leaders, a scenario that we will explore in greater detail below, such deliberations, an integral part of the overall politics of coalition, are likely to be divisive. This means that opposition parties, too, can be split asunder by the scent of power.

Empirical evidence on these matters can be gleaned from various collections of qualitative case studies of governmental coalition behaviour, in particular those edited by Browne and Dreijmanis, Bogdanor, and Pridham<sup>8</sup>. Browne and Dreijmanis edited their collection from a perspective that was very sympathetic to coalition theory. While they did not explicitly ask each of their authors to comment upon the assumption that the parties are unitary actors, they did ask them to comment on 'the actors' and some authors did provide information on the impact of intraparty politics on coalition bargaining. Bogdanor is a critic of formal theory, which he dismisses rather curtly: 'the achievements of formal theory have been very limited'.<sup>9</sup> In his short and sweeping critique, however, he does not home in on the assumption that parties are unitary actors; nor were his authors given any guidelines on the matter, though some do discuss it. Pridham's more recent collection, however, places intraparty politics at centre stage and

each of his authors was explicitly asked to comment on this particular assumption. (Being political scientists, of course, only some of them do.) Drawing on these and on a range of other sources, we have attempted a review of some of the issues that relate to the unitary actor status of political parties in each of the nineteen European party systems from which empirical analyses of the politics of coalition typically select their material. This review is presented in Appendix A; for now we are concerned with the general points it throws up. These relate to 'vertical' divisions between party factions, to 'horizontal' divisions between different levels of the party hierarchy, to actual party splits, and to partial fusions of parties into electoral coalitions.

#### *'Coherent' versus 'Factional' Parties*

The first conclusion to be drawn from a general review of the bargaining status of European political parties reinforces the conclusion that almost no party can be considered a unitary actor in terms of every potentially interesting facet of party competition. Notwithstanding this, however, some parties clearly behave much more like unitary actors than others.

The most unified actors in bargaining terms are without doubt the Communist parties, many of them still practising a form of intraparty decision making that is based on the traditions of democratic centralism. For some Communist parties this intraparty discipline may be possible precisely because it has not been necessary for them to take the difficult decisions that face a party forced to choose whether or not to compromise basic principles in order to get into office. The Luxemburg Communist Party, for example, is significant in electoral terms but has not been considered seriously as a potential coalition actor; it therefore appears to remain remarkably united, a product in part of the absence of those dilemmas with which the genuine prospect of office might have presented it. In contrast to this, the Communist parties of Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, and Finland have all at some time been forced to balance the ideological purity of their policies against the consequences of political expediency. Rifts opened up by such debates may well, indeed, have had much to do with the decline of the Spanish Communist Party from its high hopes in the immediate post-Franco period. In general,

however, European Communist parties present good examples of one of the general types of coalitional actor that we will be considering: the party that may well face internal strife when deciding upon coalitional strategies but which, once it has decided, acts in a unified and unambiguous manner. We can think of such parties as 'coherent' actors in coalitional terms.

This general category of coherent coalitional actors is by no means the exclusive preserve of Communist parties. Many of the Scandinavian bourgeois parties can also be seen in this light, together with parties such as the VVD in The Netherlands, the Conservatives in Britain, and the FPD in West Germany, as well as Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in Ireland. There are, of course, several types of intraparty decision making structure that may lead to coherent coalitional behaviour. The democratic centralist traditions of the Communist parties allow for strategy to be debated at various levels in the party hierarchy but demand absolute adherence to the party line once strategy has been determined. More authoritarian party decision making systems, such as those of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in Ireland or the FDP in Germany, may simply place the power to decide in the hands of a small party elite and maintain discipline by the enforcement of severe sanctions against dissenters.

In the starkest contrast to the set of coherent coalitional actors we find a type of 'party' that may well be no more than '... a coalition of mini-parties run by an oligarchy of factional leaders ... a ship whose crew is in a permanent state of mutiny', to take Irving's characterization of the Italian Christian Democrats (DC).<sup>10</sup> 'The party as a coalition of factions' is a category that includes many of those with generally Christian Democratic orientations. We might include here as examples, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), the Democratic Centre (UCD) and the Alianza Popular (AP) in Spain, the Social Democratic Centre (CDS) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD) in Portugal and, of course, the Gaullists in France. Such parties tend to see themselves as parties of government. The need to distribute the more valuable trophies of office within semi-permanent parties of government may encourage factionalism based around major party personalities. It may also mean that such parties are held together by no more than a mutual desire to cling on to power almost at any cost. Conversely, we might speculate that such parties, located

as they tend to be at some pivotal position in the configuration of possible coalitions, can afford the luxury of factionalism. Since they are often so hard to dislodge from office, splits and factions may be far less damaging to their bargaining position and may therefore be more tolerable. One way or the other, even in government, there is a tendency for the factions within such parties to attempt to outmanoeuvre each other by forming outside alliances. Classic examples can be found in the machinations of senior DC politicians in Italy. In Belgium, alliances between factions of different parties have even been formalized in explicit groupings, such as *Démocratie Chrétienne*, that have linked one PSC faction with members of other parties and pitted these against the other PSC factions.

Very rarely does it make sense to regard factionalized parties as having a single unambiguous policy position on any one issue. Parts of such parties often tend to be closer to 'rival' parties in the system than they do to other parts of their own party. Forced out of government for some reason, such coalitions of factions may fall apart once their *raison d'être* is destroyed—the single most spectacular example of this being the almost total collapse of the Spanish UCD after it lost power in 1982, when its seat total fell from 168 to 13.

TABLE 2.1. Differences between unitary and factionalized coalition actors

	<i>Party as unitary actor</i>	<i>Party as coalition of factions</i>
<i>Policy</i>	Single policy position (hence policy affinities with other parties are also unambiguous)	Range of policy positions (hence policy affinities with other parties are ambiguous)
<i>Coalitional preferences</i>	Single set of preferences concerning the range of potential coalitions	Internally conflicting sets of preferences concerning range of potential coalitions
<i>Bargaining style</i>	Bilateral negotiations between party leaders and leaders of other potential coalition parties	Multilateral negotiations by faction leaders with other faction leaders both inside and outside party

Parties, therefore, can vary in the extent to which, for bargaining

purposes, they can be considered to be unitary actors or coalitions of factions. Some of the main dimensions of this variation are summarized in Table 2.1. Stated even at this very crude level, it is clear that there will be major differences in the style of coalitional behaviour between different parties within the same political system. One of the clearest examples of this can be found in the politics of coalition in Italy during 1986-8. The Socialist Party, having moved away from a period of factionalism, was more or less united behind its leader, Bettino Craxi. In contrast, the Christian Democrats (DC) could justifiably be regarded as being any one of a number of different parties, depending on who was the Prime Ministerial candidate at the time. For the whole of this period, it was more or less taken for granted that the same set of five parties, the *pentapartito* formula, would form the government. Most of the politics of coalition in Italy, therefore, revolved around which particular DC politician would be Prime Minister, once it had been decided that the Socialists under Craxi had taken their turn at this. Coalitions formed and fell as different DC politicians attempted to forge a stable government based on the five-party formula. Only by identifying the various DC factions and looking at these as separate coalitional actors does this series of cabinet 'crises' make any sense. Accounts of the coalitional process in Italy which ignore such matters simply see the same five-party coalition falling and reforming over and over again and thereby miss most of the point of what was actually going on.

For particular parties that are best represented as coalitions of distinct factions, therefore, accounts of the coalitional process must take intraparty politics into account. Such parties will have ambiguous policy positions and internally conflicting sets of preference orderings over different potential coalitions, and will tend to engage in multilateral multilevel coalition bargaining. Such phenomena are without doubt capable of influencing the outcome of the coalitional process and, provided that they can be specified in advance in a reasonably general manner, can and should be considered.

#### *The Party as a Whole versus the Parliamentary Party*

The second general point that emerges from the review of the

unitary actor status of parties in Appendix A is the clear distinction between the parliamentary party and the rest of the party. The bottom line in most coalition negotiations is a vote of confidence in the legislature. Both in theory and in reality, most parliamentary parties can exert considerable autonomy in legislative votes, a situation arising from the tradition that public representatives cannot be told how to vote by anyone, even those in control of the party to which they belong. Article 38.1 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany puts this most clearly with its provision that 'deputies . . . shall be representatives of the whole people, not bound by orders and instructions, and shall be subject only to their conscience'. Article 11 of the Parliament Act in Finland contains a similar provision.<sup>11</sup>

All of this means that the level of voting discipline within a parliamentary party is a very important aspect of its unitary actor status for coalitional purposes. Even parties that are seriously split may behave as unitary actors on key votes. The Irish Labour Party, for example, was very deeply divided on coalition during the period of its participation in the 1982-7 government with Fine Gael, yet the Labour Parliamentary Party (which included a leading anti-coalitionist as chief whip) was always whipped to vote for the coalition government. To vote against the whip meant expulsion from the party, as several Labour TDs found out after those rare occasions when the party did not vote as a united bloc.

A situation such as this may cause grave divisions between a party's parliamentary body and its rank-and-file members. It is obviously much easier for the rank-and-file membership to bring a parliamentary party to heel when the party is in opposition; indeed, it may even be impossible to do this when the party is in government, given the constitutional obligations of party leaders who are ministers to abide by collective cabinet decisions. This means that the prospect of going into government can create a severe conflict of interest between the parliamentary party and the rest of the party. The actual moment of going into government, furthermore, may represent the point at which the rank-and-file loses control of the parliamentary party. When the party is in opposition, it is governed by its own constitution. When members of the party form part of a cabinet they are governed by the constitution of the state itself. This forces the rank-and-file to extract all they can during formation negotiations, a factor that

might well operate to exclude the British Labour Party from entering a coalition, for example, even if its parliamentary leadership decided that it wanted to do so.

The general rule is that the rank-and-file, more concerned with ideology and less in line for the other spoils of office, tend to resent the policy compromises necessary to enter coalition and hence to oppose them. The parliamentary leaders, at least some of whom will become cabinet ministers, are more inclined to see the virtues of policy compromises if these increase the chance of the party going into government.

#### *Party Discipline and Party Splits*

Related to the distinction between the more or less disciplined parliamentary wing of a party and its rank-and-file membership is the phenomenon of the party that is well disciplined yet liable to split. As the Danish party system illustrates quite clearly, rigid party discipline can lead to a propensity for splits. Within a very disciplined party no option exists for the expression of dissenting views other than the formation of a quite distinct breakaway party. This may well then itself be very disciplined until it in turn splits.

Parliamentary party discipline is in general very high in Scandinavia, a situation that means that, if we confine ourselves to snapshots of coalitional politics at particular times, the parties indeed appear as unitary actors. Only when we look at the longer-term interaction between coalitional politics and the party system, and specifically at the way in which coalition bargaining encourages party splits and fusions, can we see what we miss by viewing the parties as unitary actors. Within the terms of most existing coalition theories, therefore, the unitary actor assumption is not a bad one for the Scandinavian 'iron discipline' party systems. What this serves to highlight, of course, is not the accuracy of the assumption but the current lack of any genuinely dynamic model of the coalitional process.<sup>12</sup> Parties only seem to be unitary actors because existing theoretical accounts do work with snapshots of the system at particular moments, in the sense that the elections held in February and November 1982 in Ireland, for example, might as well have been held on different planets for all the difference they made to most theories. If that is all we

do, then we will not be forced to concern ourselves with party splits and fusions and it is very hard not to see the party as a unitary actor for coalitional purposes. It is only when we look at developments over time that the effects on the system of splits and fusions begin to show up.

#### *Electoral Coalitions and Electoral Systems*

The fourth conclusion that emerges from the general review in Appendix A concerns electoral coalitions. What is clear is that there are no simple distinctions to be drawn between electoral coalitions, parties, and coalition governments. One can shade into another far more easily than most existing approaches presume. A very good example is the formation of the Democratic Alliance (AD) between the CDS and PSD in Portugal. This began as an electoral alliance, but 'assumed the form of a coalition of electoral, parliamentary and governmental scope'.<sup>13</sup> The government became known as the Democratic Alliance Government; but after the AD split in early 1983, the PSD subsequently returned to government in coalition with the Socialists and the CDS went into opposition.

Another very clear example of an electoral alliance that has had an impact far beyond election time is the CDU/CSU in West Germany. There is considerable disagreement even among German politics specialists about whether the CDU/CSU should be regarded as an electoral arrangement between two parties who agree not to compete against each other in particular geographic areas or as what amounts to a single party. The CSU did once break its formal links with the CDU, albeit for a very short period, and the main factor that reactivated the alliance was a fear on the part of the CSU that the CDU would campaign against it in Bavaria. This incident illustrates that the potential for each of the two parties to pursue an independent coalition strategy exists even if the current practice of coalition politics in Germany gives no serious indication that one day one partner might find itself out of a government that includes the other.

Some electoral systems positively encourage electoral coalitions by giving a seat bonus to larger parties. We return to a more detailed discussion of this in Chapter 8, when we deal with structural constraints and influences on coalition bargaining. In

the meantime, however, it is worth noting that the formation of electoral coalitions may be as much a product of electoral necessity as of any real affinity between the parties concerned. The electoral system, of course, also has a bearing on party splits. Very proportional systems make splits more attractive since they enable even tiny breakaway factions to gain parliamentary representation. Certainly, in Israel and The Netherlands, the two countries typically held to have the most proportional electoral systems, party splits are endemic. At the other extreme, electoral systems that give a substantial seat bonus to big parties, such as those in Britain and Greece, discourage party splits. Thus the electoral system may well be a key factor in the unitary actor status of the parties. Even in systems with no history of major party splits, a PR electoral system keeps at least the possibility of splits on the bargaining agenda.

#### *Summarizing the Main Deviations from Unitary Actor Status*

Putting all of this together, it is clear that, while no party is a unitary actor in the strict sense, many parties can be treated as if they were unitary actors for coalitional purposes. It is possible for coalitional purposes, furthermore, to identify four very general categories of party.

In the first place there are what we have called 'coherent' parties, especially the Communist parties and those run on personalist authoritarian lines. These tend to function as unitary actors both when viewed at a single point in time and when their interaction with coalitional politics is considered over a period of years. This is not, of course, to say that such parties are unaffected by the politics of coalition. Far from it. Many Communist parties in the 1960s and early 1970s, for example, were torn by debate over whether fundamental ideological principles should be sacrificed in a 'historic compromise' designed to get the party into government, typically in coalition with socialists. In this way, the coalitional possibilities on offer have a fundamental effect on the internal life of a party. For our purposes, however, we must draw the line somewhere. While the impact of coalition on intraparty politics is a fascinating and integral part of the politics of coalition, it is one that we will consider further only when it feeds back into the system as the impact of intraparty politics on coalition. We will

not lose too much, therefore, provided that we bear all of the above qualifications in mind, by treating coherent parties as unitary actors for coalitional purposes.

In the second place there are parties which, while prone to splitting as a result of the stresses and strains imposed by coalition bargaining, are disciplined enough to be treated as unitary actors at least at the point of coalition formation or, indeed, at any other fixed point in time. These parties, however, may well not be unitary actors when viewed over time, given their propensity to split and refuse. The Danish parties provide good examples of this category, as do some of those in Belgium and The Netherlands. In terms of existing coalition theories, therefore, which do tend to concentrate exclusively on a series of disconnected snapshot views of the party system, it does not cause too much of a problem to treat these parties as unitary actors. The problem is not so much that the assumption is empirically wrong in its own terms as that the theories are excessively limited in their scope. When a more genuinely dynamic approach to the analysis of coalition bargaining is developed, the splitting potential of such parties must become an integral part of any account of the politics of coalition.

In the third place there are parties which are clearly not unitary actors in any sense of the word, the Italian Christian Democrats being the classic example. Such parties do not behave as one, even at a single point in time. Any snapshot that we might take of them will find different factions of the same party wanting different things, talking to different people, and making informal alliances with factions of other parties. Coalition crises involving such parties are as likely to be crises of intraparty politics as they are to be crises of interparty politics. To treat such parties as unitary actors will clearly miss the point of much of what is going on in the coalitional process, a caveat that is especially important for France, Italy, and Spain.

In the fourth place we find electoral coalitions of parties. These, of course, we know not to be unitary actors—indeed, the problem for coalition theories in this case is rather the reverse of the usual one. Sets of actors that are taken to be completely independent coalesce in the run-up to an election and announce that they will behave as if they are unitary actors in coalition negotiations. The question here is one of whether it is reasonable to regard each

group as a separate actor in such circumstances, as empirical coalition theories generally do. The alternative is to take the electoral coalition at its word and regard it as a single bargaining actor. There are a number of significant examples of this strategy of electoral proto-coalition formation. There is the British Liberal/SDP Alliance in 1983 and 1987, the Dutch PvdA/D66 alliance in 1971 and the PvdA/D66/PPR alliance of 1972, the Dutch CDA alliance of CHU, ARP, and KVP between 1975 and 1980, the Fine Gael/Labour alliance in Ireland in 1973, the Democratic alliance between PSD and CDS in Portugal, and even on some interpretations, the CDU/CSU alliance in Germany. It is certainly safer to regard electoral alliances as proto-coalitions of separate actors rather than as unitary actors in their own right, but there is no doubt that more attention should be devoted to them than they currently receive. When the coalition formation strategies of electoral coalitions are publicly announced—as they must be, since a more powerful legislative bargaining bloc is precisely what electoral alliances set out to offer the electorate—then the extent to which the alliance can subsequently be abandoned is a significant empirical matter. Certainly, when two or more parties promise to go into government together if they are able, such promises tend only rarely to be broken.

Overall, our general conclusion on the matter of whether or not we can treat parties as unitary actors for coalitional purposes is that we can indeed do so if we confine ourselves to analysing individual episodes of coalitional behaviour at given time points and if we make a few significant exceptions for parties that really are no more than coalitions of factions in every sense. If we wish to develop a more dynamic approach to coalitional behaviour, however, we have no option but to take account of the possibility that we are *not* dealing with a fixed set of unitary actors. There are simply too many examples of party splits and fusions induced by the politics of coalition to ignore this problem. Since the development of a dynamic account of the coalitional process is probably the most important outstanding task facing coalition theorists, the unitary actor status of the parties will in future be a far more important matter than it has been up until now.

#### WHAT HAPPENS IF PARTIES ARE NOT UNITARY ACTORS?

While coalition theory (with the exception of the work of Luebbert<sup>14</sup>) has had little to say on what happens if parties are

not unitary actors, there is a considerable general literature on the internal politics of parties. While much of this has no direct bearing on coalitional behaviour, there are some notable exceptions. Hirschman, for example, discusses the impact on interparty competition of the divergent views that are likely to be held by party workers and party voters, while Robertson considers the impact of the divergent views of campaign contributors and voters.<sup>15</sup> In more recent times, increasing stress has been placed on rational choice accounts of intraparty politics.<sup>16</sup> Most significantly of all, however, Luebbert proposes a theory of coalitional behaviour that is based fundamentally upon assumptions about intraparty politics. He assumes that party leaders are motivated above all by the desire to remain party leaders and considers the role played by policy in the light of this. The really central features of party policy are selected by leaders so as to minimize dissent within the various sections of the party, who are implicitly assumed to be more policy motivated than the leadership. 'From this perspective, the leader's task is to insist on preferences that are sufficiently focussed that they generate the widest possible support within the party, but sufficiently vague and opaque that they do not engage in government formation the disagreements that are a constant feature of any party'.<sup>17</sup> This leads party leaders to restrict the issues on which they will take a stand in coalition negotiations to a very limited number that command widespread support within the party. If they succeed in this, then the party will be saddled with few policy positions that present leaders with the prospect of a public and damaging climbdown if they are conceded in negotiations. Those positions that do represent sticking points in negotiations are selected as the ones which generate sufficient unity within the party that a refusal to participate in government if they are not conceded does not split the party or undermine its leadership.

On Luebbert's view of the role of policy in party competition, coalition formation negotiations are in fact mainly about intraparty politics.

What makes the talks so long, difficult and complex is generally not the lack of goodwill among the elites, but the fact that negotiations must appear the way they do in order to satisfy the members whose orientations are still largely attuned to the vocal, symbolic, and ideological aspects characteristic of each respective political culture. It is wrong to assume

that, because interparty negotiations take a long time, much is being negotiated among the parties. *Most negotiation in cases of protracted government formation takes place between leaders and their followers and among rival factions within parties . . .* In parties in which factional competition is intense, government formation provides an often ideal occasion for one faction to seek to sabotage another.<sup>18</sup>

Luebbert goes on to generate an account of coalition formation by superimposing these assumptions about intraparty politics on a classification of political systems into broad structural types, such as those which are consensual, those which are competitive, and so on. These classifications, and the 'testing' of the theory that is based on them, are far more contentious than the general idea of placing intraparty politics at centre stage in coalition theory, but they need not concern us here. The important point is that Luebbert was one of the very few people theorizing about the politics of coalition to take politics within parties seriously. His approach, which is indeed fundamentally based on the dynamics of intraparty competition, clearly does have the potential to expand our understanding of the politics of coalition. To take two vital examples, both minority governments and surplus majority governments (those which carry 'dummy' parties whose votes are not needed for a legislative majority) can be far more easily assimilated by Luebbert's account than they can by most others. Each of these types of government, both of which are typically regarded as pathologies by conventional theories, can offer attractions for party leaders motivated above all by the desire to remain party leaders.

It is certainly not our intention to develop an entirely new body of theory based on the impact of intraparty politics upon coalition bargaining. We do, however, want to put the matter very firmly on the agenda. For the time being we must content ourselves, having cast at least some doubt on the unitary actor status of political parties, with considering the rather more modest question of which basic decision making unit we should use as the most appropriate building block when constructing an account of coalitional behaviour.

#### *The Party as a Coalition of Politicians*

The most radical solution is to regard parties as coalitions of individual political entrepreneurs.<sup>19</sup> This approach has the

advantage of returning to first principles and establishing the individual politician as the fundamental unit of analysis. It allows cliques, factions, parties, electoral coalitions of parties, and governments all to be regarded as proto-coalitions of actors, formed at various levels of the decision making hierarchy.

The main disadvantage of this approach for the study of government coalitions is that it is both unrealistic and impossibly unwieldy. It either fails to acknowledge at all that some proto-coalitions of politicians are far more enduring than others or does so only on the basis of *ad hoc* empiricism. If politicians have party or factional loyalties, for example, we need specific information on just how strong these loyalties are in order to assess how they might make some proto-coalitions much more durable than others.

What is remarkable is the enduring stability of most cliques, factions, and political parties, given the utterly fantastic number of theoretically possible combinations of politicians in a legislature. Indeed, this very basic point forms the basis of a good argument against the use of the individual politician as the fundamental unit of analysis in studies of coalitional behaviour. Quite apart from anything else, the systematic practical evaluation of all of the theoretical coalition possibilities is not merely unwieldy but computationally impossible, as a simple practical example will show quite clearly. Table 2.2 shows the results of the 1983 election in Iceland and the 1984 election in Luxemburg, to what are far and away Europe's two smallest legislatures. If we see parties as coalitions of politicians, then the number of different possible coalitions of politicians each compatible with these election results is phenomenal. In the case of Luxemburg in 1984, the number of different ways in which the 64 legislators could have combined to produce the given configuration of parties was about 459,154,630,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. In the somewhat more complex result produced in the rather smaller Icelandic legislature in 1983 the number of possibilities for coalitions of politicians consistent with the final party configuration was several thousand times higher at about 9,813,276,800,000,000,000,000,000,000,000.

These may seem large numbers, but they are small compared to the numbers of possible coalitions of politicians in the more typical European legislature, a number that increases in a factorial

TABLE 2.2. Election results in Iceland, 1983 and Luxemburg, 1984

Country	Year	Party	Seats
Iceland	1983	Independence Party	23
		Progressive Party	14
		People's Alliance	10
		Social Democrats	6
		Social Democratic Federation	4
		Womens List	3
		TOTAL	60
Luxemburg	1984	Christian Social Party	25
		Socialist Workers Party	21
		Democratic Party	14
		Green Alternative	2
		Communist Party	2
		TOTAL	64

relationship with the number of legislators and is, for mere mortals at least, effectively infinite. Set against this range of theoretical possibilities, legislative behaviour in the real world shows an amazing stability, a stability brought about by the existence of enduring factions and political parties. There can be little doubt that, if we are forced to choose between a reliance on the individual politician or on the party as our unit of analysis, then the party is the only practical alternative.

#### *The Party as a Coalition of Factions*

We might, however, seek a level of analysis between politician and party, focusing, say, on the party faction as the basic bargaining unit. The dangers that we face here are those of *ad hoc*-ery, the dreaming up of a particular explanation for each particular problem that faces us. In certain cases 'factions' may be very clearly and uncontentionously identifiable by all concerned. A good example is the separation of the German CDU/CSU into its regional component parts. When factions are as enduring and clear-cut as this, it often makes sense to treat them as separate

bargaining entities. Even if they have yet to behave independently in practice, the potential for them to do so clearly exists. Moving beyond such clear-cut cases, however, any particular configuration of factions that we might choose to recognize is bound to be arbitrary. Worse, if we recognize two or more cross-cutting dimensions of factionalism, then we will be forced to deal either with the problem of overlapping factions or with a rapidly expanding set of subfactions. In the absence of unambiguous empirical referents, there is no logical stopping point in the division of parties into factions and subfactions. We quickly approach once more the level of the individual deputy and the attendant problems that we have just considered.

#### *The Party as a (Fissiparous) Party*

The final possibility is to retain the party as our unit of analysis but to consider its splitting potential. Many of the potential dimensions of cleavage within parties with which we may be forced to deal, of course, will be entirely *ad hoc*. One recurring basis of cleavage, for example, is a personality difference between party notables, a matter that will be impossible to explore in terms of anything other than particular local details. If we concentrate on policy as a basis for intraparty politics, however, there remains none the less considerable scope for systematic empirical analysis. Using various independent measures of the policy positions of party members (with roll call analyses, elite surveys and content analyses of politicians' speeches being obvious sources), the potential lines of policy based cleavage are in principle easy to identify.

In this way the policy based coalition theories that we shall consider in subsequent chapters might well be modified to take account of the splitting potential of parties. This can be measured in terms of one or more of the policy dimensions under consideration and we should note that the splitting potential of a party can be quite different on different dimensions. A party may behave as a unitary actor on one policy dimension, but be schizophrenic on another. The case of the Rassemblement Wallon (RW) in Belgium shows quite clearly how a party used to fighting elections on one basic issue, in this case the language problem, can find itself open to splits when other issues must be faced. The

socioeconomic policy dimension became much more important for the RW once it went into office, causing internal problems that gravely weakened the party. The extent to which a party is fissiparous in policy terms, therefore, depends upon the relative salience of different policy dimensions, an argument that will come as no surprise to seasoned party hacks who will know full well that a large part of practical party competition concerns the continual search for issues that will split the opposition.

Whether or not a party can function as a unitary actor, therefore, depends upon the bundle of issue dimensions on which it must express a position. The bundle can change and be changed as a result of the hurly-burly of day-to-day party competition. Since the fact that party splits are relatively frequent in the real world of coalition politics provides one of the strongest reasons not to regard parties as unitary actors, it seems worthwhile to make at least some attempt to consider the impact of actual and potential splits in an account of the politics of coalition.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There can be no doubt that parties are not unitary actors for many of the purposes for which political scientists may be interested in them. For the purposes of coalition theory, however, this assumption turns out to be not quite as serious as it appears at first sight. This is because European political parties are, by and large, well disciplined—going into and coming out of coalitions as a single bloc. Nevertheless, European party systems are in a continuous state of flux, with old parties splitting and merging to form new ones, and a dynamic approach to the analysis of coalitions and party competition must take account of this. An approach based on the individual legislator as the fundamental unit of analysis would be impossibly unwieldy, both in theory and in practice, while one based on the party faction runs the risk of *ad hoc*-ery. Keeping the party as the unit of analysis, we could look at each party's splitting potential and investigate the implications of this: but once more, many of the factors that encourage party splits lend themselves only to *ad hoc* treatment. A key exception to this, however, concerns policy based intraparty

politics, which does offer the possibility of systematic empirical and theoretical treatment.

In short, the reasons for treating the party as a unitary actor are part empirical, part theoretical. The empirical reality of legislative party discipline means that, at least for the static approaches to be found in most existing theories, the assumption is valid. Moving to a dynamic approach, though, the empirical reality of party splits presents a problem. The reason for retaining the unitary actor assumption is in this case theoretical, a product of the fact that many of the reasons why parties split can only be dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis. There is no doubt, however (and Luebbert's work points the way in this regard), that some consideration of the impact of politics within parties will be one of the directions in which the study of coalitions will develop in years to come.

**Pokud jste dočetli až sem, vězte, že závěrečný  
test pro vás nebude obtížný.**

*Post scriptum:* **Nezapomeňte, že součástí readeru není jedna položka  
z povinné literatury**

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